ELEMENTS OF AND STRATEGIES FOR MAINTAINING A POLICE MARRIAGE: THE LIVED PERSPECTIVES OF ROYAL CANADIAN MOUNTED POLICE OFFICERS AND THEIR SPOUSES

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfilment Requirements

for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in Psychology

University of Regina

by

Jody L. Carrington

Regina, Saskatchewan

January 2006

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-18860-6
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 978-0-494-18860-6

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Jody L. Carrington, candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, has presented a thesis titled, ***Elements of and Strategies for Maintaining a Police Marriage: The Lived Perspectives of Royal Canadian Mounted Police Officers and Their Spouses,*** in an oral examination held on January 6, 2006. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner:	Dr. Larry M. Coutts, EPSI-Inc., Gatineau, PQ
Supervisor:	Dr. Cannie Stark, Department of Psychology
Committee Member:	Dr. William E. Smythe, Department of Psychology
Committee Member:	Dr. Mary Hampton, Department of Psychology, Luther College
Committee Member:	Dr. Gloria Miller, Faculty of Business Administration
Chair of Defense:	Dr. Wendee Kubik, Department of Women's Studies

ABSTRACT

Researchers have recently begun to examine the strategies that couples employ to maintain their marriage, along with the effect that certain occupations may have upon the marital relationship. Policing has been identified as a particularly stressful occupation, involving many facets that have been noted as detrimental to the marital relationship (e.g., rotational shift work, job unpredictability). Little attention, however, has been devoted to police marriages that are successful and how couples manage to overcome the challenges and adversities of police life. The goal of the current study was to form a clearer theoretical understanding of the factors involved in maintaining a long-term marriage, in light of the stressors of police work. Nine police officers and nine spouses of police officers of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) were interviewed using an in-depth semi-structured protocol. These 18 interviews were transcribed verbatim and then analysed using interpretational qualitative analysis. Over seven successive stages of analysis, two main themes and one unifying concept emerged from the data. Within one of the main themes, participants identified components of RCMP work that both shaped and had an impact on their marriage; the second main theme was reflective of many of the insights and strategies that participants used to maintain their marriage or to cope with the challenges of being involved in a police marriage. The overall unifying concept that united the data was participants' sense of the necessity to ***Search for the Balance*** between job demands of the RCMP and their family life. Feeling "unbalanced", either because of life demands (e.g., children, illness) or because of job demands (e.g., stressful job situations, at transfer time), was a common experience; what appeared critical, however, was that RCMP couples who stayed together had the desire to *search*

continually for a balance between job demands and their home life. I was also able to use the information gathered from this study to develop an integrated model of relationship maintenance within the context of RCMP marriages and to provide recommendations and intervention strategies that may promote the health and longevity of RCMP marriages and possibly officers' careers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, my heartfelt thank you to Dr. Cannie Stark, who has been my mentor, my guiding force, my toughest critic, and my biggest supporter over my seven years of graduate school. Dr. Stark, I have learned so very much from your incredible ability to teach and to mentor your students. The insight and wisdom that you have imparted over the years will serve to forever shape me as a researcher, a clinician, and as a person. Thank-you. And to the Starlights—your support and encouragement was always a comfort (a special thanks to Tammy for her assistance in creating the Figures).

I would like to thank the members of my dissertation committee, Dr. Mary Hampton, Dr. Gloria Miller, and Dr. Bill Smythe. I feel so very lucky to have been influenced by three such incredibly wise individuals. It was also an honour to have had Dr. Larry Coutts as my external examiner; I am extremely grateful for his insights and suggestions. Thank-you also to Dr. Wendee Kubik who chaired my defence.

I also acknowledge, with gratitude, the financial support that I received from the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in the form of scholarships. I am also very grateful to SSHRC for having been a recipient of their Doctoral Fellowship award.

My appreciation also to those who supported this project at Depot Division, including Superintendent Curt Tugnum. As well, to Dr. Robert Roy ("T" Division Psychologist), who was willing to take the time to listen to my ideas and to offer his suggestions and encouragement. I extend my special and sincere thanks to the spouses and officers who participated in this research. Your willingness to share your insights and experiences made this project such an enjoyable process. I hope that I have captured your stories accurately. It was an honour and a pleasure to work with you.

DEDICATION

This dissertation, which exemplifies many years of sweat and tears, could not have been accomplished if it were not for the undying support of family and friends, near and far. At the forefront, and always the most important to me, is family. Thanks Mom, Dad, and Curt for attempting to understand this process of graduate school, and for always, always offering me your encouragement and support. You have been my biggest fans, and the pride that I feel from each of you has always warmed my heart. I love you more.

And to the many friends who have become my "other" family along the way—Lucy, Heather, Cindy, and Larry—you were the motivators, cheerleaders, editors, and supporters that I so often needed. I am so grateful to have shared this experience with each of you and to have had your love and encouragement on this chapter of the journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICIES

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The development, maintenance, and dissolution of marital relationships have become prevalent areas of focus for many social science researchers. Wenzel and Harvey (2001) have suggested that one of the most daunting issues confronting marital relationship researchers concerns the dynamics of how people both maintain and enhance their close romantic relationships. It appears, however, that many researchers in this field have focused their efforts on predicting and understanding the processes involved in the dissolution of marriage and divorce (e.g., Carrere & Gottman, 1999; Christensen & Walczynski, 1997; Gottman, 1993, 1994, 1998; Pasley, Kerpelman, & Guilbert, 2001; Swann, Rentfrow, & Gosling, 2003), rather than on the processes involved in building and maintaining a successful marriage. For example, in a recent summary, Gottman (1998), one of the leading theorists in the field of marital relationships, integrated findings from a number of researchers and highlighted consistent patterns of marital functioning—all of them negative). These patterns included: a) greater negative affect reciprocity in unhappy couples; b) lower ratios of positivity to negativity in unhappy couples; c) less positive sentiment override in unhappy couples; d) the presence of criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling in couples headed for divorce; e) greater evidence of the wife demand-husband withdraw pattern in unhappy couples; and f) lasting negative attributions about the partner in unhappy couples. Unquestionably, interest in understanding what contributes to marital failure is paralleled by the high divorce rate that has persisted in North America since the 1970s (e.g., Rogers & Amato, 1997; Trovato, 2000).

Over the last decade, and more so within the past five years, researchers have begun to shed light on the strategies and behaviours that relational partners use in the process of sustaining their intimate relationships. Although researchers have historically devoted less attention to this more positive approach to understanding marital relationships, a number of researchers and theorists have suggested that further efforts need to be devoted to understanding the factors involved in the maintenance of marital relationships (e.g., Canary, Stafford, & Semic, 2002; Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2001), especially since what may maintain an intimate relationship may not merely be the absence of the negative features identified in the failure of relationship literature.

1.1 Developmental Transitions in Marital Relationships

In an attempt to understand better the processes involved in long-term marriages, the relational factors that are present at different marital stages have been highlighted. Researchers have recently suggested that, on average, marital satisfaction probably does not follow a U-shaped function over the course of the marital stages, as was once suggested (e.g., Rollins & Feldman, 1970), but instead drops markedly over the first 10 years of marriage and then drops more gradually in the following decades (Glenn, 1998; Vaillant & Vaillant, 1993). Thus, it appears that there are different factors involved in marital relationships that affect marital resiliency at different stages including newlyweds, parenthood, midlife, and beyond (e.g., Pasley et al., 2001).

More specifically, early during marriage, the content of spousal roles is actively under construction (Pasley et al., 2001). In fact, *newlyweds* experience the sharpest drop in marital satisfaction of any marital period, and this experience is similar for both wives

and husbands (Kurdek, 1998). This downward slope of satisfaction seems to plateau however, by the fourth year.

Transition into *parenthood* has also been identified as an influential turning point in many marriages (e.g., Belsky & Kelly, 1994; Cowan & Cowan, 1992; Lindahl, Clements, & Markman, 1997), as the vast majority (approximately 90%) of married couples eventually have children (Houseknecht, 1987; Thornton & Young-DeMarco, 2001). In a recent review of longitudinal research related to the parenthood transition, Gottman and Notarius (2000) found that for 40-70% of couples, there is a drop in marital quality after the birth of children. Specifically, marital conflict increases significantly, couples revert to stereotypic gender roles, fathers withdraw into their work, and marital conversation and sexual intercourse decrease considerably (Gottman & Notarius, 2000).

The majority of Canadian adults at *mid-life* are married, have children, and are employed (Beaujot & Haddad, 2000); however, satisfying and stable marriages appear to be increasingly rare. Glenn (1998) reported that only about one third of marriages were both happy and intact after 16 years. In reviewing relationships during midlife and beyond, Gottman and Notarius (2000) noted that the overwhelming existing observational research on marriage has been relatively focussed on young couples. In the research that has been conducted with older participants, there are notable differences from the findings with younger participants, viz., that the interactions of older couples are clearly less emotional or intense than those of younger couples (Carstensen, Gottman, & Levenson, 1995). As Berman and Napier (2000) suggest, the midlife marriage often involves facing rapidly changing times, but the authors also note that it is one of the most stable and happy times in marriages. In particular, parents find their children's departure

from the home to be a freeing and rejuvenating experience (Apter, 1995). Retirement from high-stress jobs has been found to improve marital quality (Myers & Booth, 1996). Further, Scharch (1997) found that the midlife couple's greater personal maturity produces increased sexual well-being.

Overall, communication between marital partners has been conceptualised as the primary force that affects the quality of long-term marriage (e.g., Burleson & Denton, 1997; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Huston, Caughlin, Houts, Smith, & George, 2001). Researchers have confirmed the common sense notion that, throughout the developmental transitions in marriage, people are likely to stay together when their interactions are pleasant and happy rather than distressful and hostile (Canary & Stafford, 1994; Dindia, 2000; Gottman, 1993; Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Stafford & Canary, 1991). Undeniably, interdependence in relationships means that conflict may be inevitable (e.g., Baxter & Montgomery, 1997; Canary & Messman, 2001), and this is not always a negative thing. In fact, if managed effectively, conflict helps couples to solve problems and to understand each other better (Guerrero & Andersen, 2000).

Developing a close relationship has been identified as a complex and difficult task (e.g., Dindia, 2000). In fact, a number of researchers have highlighted common "relational characteristics" or factors deemed as essential to the development of close relationships, including liking one's partner, love, trust, commitment, and control mutuality (i.e., the extent to which couples agree on who has rightful influence and how the couple establishes relational goals) (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2001; Fehr, 1993, 2001; Lemieux & Hale, 2000; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2001; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b). It has been suggested, however, that *maintaining* a satisfying and

intimate long-term relationship might be an even greater challenge than *developing* the marital relationship (Gurerro & Anderson, 2000).

1.2 Maintaining the Marital Relationship

"Relational maintenance" refers to the use of communicative strategies and behaviours to prevent relationship dissolution through "the manner in which spouses are able to maintain their relationships in the face of day-to-day tasks and normative stressors" (Canary et al., 2002, p. 395). Relational maintenance, as recently reviewed by Dindia (2000), has been defined in a number of different contexts, including friendships and family relationships. Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) recently pointed out that there has been an especially keen interest in the relational maintenance of marriage—the primary question being, what do marital partners do "to keep a relationship in a specified state or condition?" (Dindia & Canary, 1993, p. 164).

It has been suggested by a number of theorists that maintenance strategies function to sustain desired attributes or the "relational characteristics" (i.e., liking, trust, commitment) that have been deemed as essential in the development of close relationships (e.g., Canary et al., 2002). In fact, many have suggested that relational maintenance is an integral part of most stable relationships (Ayres, 1983; Bell, Daly, & Gonzalez, 1987; Dindia & Canary, 1993; Wood, 2000).

1.2.1 Relational Maintenance Strategies

The most widely used typology of relational maintenance is that proposed by Stafford and Canary, originally developed in 1991. Using responses from dating and married individuals, Stafford and Canary (1991) factor analysed maintenance behaviours that were culled from the literature along with open-ended responses to questions

regarding how couples maintain their relationships. Subsequently, several researchers have used and found support for Stafford and Canary's (1991) typology in the study of sustained marital relationships (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1994; Haas & Stafford, 2005; Hendrick, 2004; Ragsdale, 1996; Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005; Stafford, Dainton, & Haas, 2000; Weigle & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b). Although others have since expanded on this model (Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Stafford et al., 2000), five relational maintenance strategies that emerged within Stafford and Canary's (1991) original analysis have received the most empirical support, including *positivity, openness, assurances, network,* and *sharing tasks*. In contrast to identifying negative interactional components, Guerrero, Eloy, and Wabnik (1993) noted that these identified strategies are all proactive and constructive maintenance actions.

Positivity involves creating pleasant interactions including being cheerful, giving compliments, and accommodating the other's wishes (Stafford & Canary, 1991). Couples reporting mutually high levels of accommodation experience greater marital satisfaction and investment in their relationship (Rusbult, Verette, Whitney, Slovik, & Lipkus, 1991; Rusbult, Bissonnette, Arriaga, & Cox, 1998), as well as a strong connection with the relational characteristic of liking (Dindia, 2000). In fact, positivity has been associated at moderate levels with all relational characteristics (Canary & Stafford, 1994).

Openness involves direct discussion with one another via self-disclosure. Willingness to communicate and self-disclose has been identified as a particularly important factor (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004), even when other components, such as positivity, were not present (Prager, 2000; Prager & Buhrmester, 1998; Weigel &

Ballard-Reisch, 2002). In fact, many have suggested a complex "communication deficit hypothesis" to account for marital difficulties, in that couples allow conflict to escalate because they lack the communicative ability to control conflict (e.g., Burleson & Denton, 1997; Burleson, Metts, & Kirch, 2000; Marshall, 1994; O'Donohue & Crouch, 1996). Being open, however, has been considered less important than some of the other dimensions (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993).

Assurances occur when partners show commitment to one another by statements such as "I love you", engage in behaviours that imply a future, and provide social support to each other. In fact, supportive spouse behaviour has also been reported to be very important in sustained marriages (Cutrona, 1996; Davila, Bradbury, Cohan, Tolchluk, 1997); for instance, wives' lack of supportive behaviour predicted marital stress a year later (Cutrona, 1996). Use of assurances has been found to be most effective in sustaining commitment (Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993).

Social networking refers to accepting and spending time with one another's social circles, spending time with mutual friends, and engaging in similar activities. In fact, a number of researchers have reported that wives and husbands experience greater marital satisfaction when they share mutual friends and are involved with extended family (e.g., Cotton, Antill, & Cunningham, 1993; Milardo & Helms-Erikson, 2000).

Finally, *sharing tasks*, including performing chores relevant to the relationship such as household duties, as well as participating in self-growth activities together, seems to be a powerful and perhaps underrated maintenance behaviour (Aron, Norman, & Aron, 2001; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Haas & Stafford, 2005; Ragsdale, 1996). In fact, Haas and Stafford (2005) reported that sharing tasks was the most frequently reported

maintenance strategy in their recent study, and one used virtually equally by both women and men.

1.2.2 Individual Differences and Relational Maintenance

As Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) highlighted, researchers have found that results aimed at predicting the use of relational maintenance strategies have been variable at best. The authors have suggested that one reason for this variability lies in the instability of the construct of relational maintenance across different samples and types of relationships. Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) suggested that individual difference variables may account for some of this variability.

For example, researchers have reported that women are more inclined than men to engage in relational maintenance and are likely to use more of each of the strategies than are men (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Ragsdale, 1996; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b). For instance, wives perceived significantly less openness and sharing of tasks than did their husbands (Canary & Stafford, 1994). More recently, however, researchers have suggested that it may be one's gender role, rather than their sex, that is the more salient variable (Aylor, 2004; Stafford et al., 2000). For example, Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) identified individual communicator variables that were predictive of the use of relational maintenance strategies, especially among husbands. The authors suggested that men who report a high ability to modify their self-presentation tend to use positivity often and those men who were skilled at varying their behaviour across different situations seemed less likely to use the social networking strategy (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005).

Although Stafford and colleagues (2000) concluded that maintenance behaviours cannot entirely account for resilience in relationships, it has been suggested that there may be a number of individual difference variables that contribute to the use of relational maintenance strategies and that many of these still need to be explored (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005). One such factor yet to be considered is the potential influence of the occupations that marital partners are engaged in as contributing to the use of specific relational maintenance behaviours. This might be particularly important to explore because, as Bradbury and colleagues (2000) concluded, the meaning and implications of behavioural interactions of marriage cannot be fully understood without considering the broader context in which those interactions occur.

1.3 Occupation and Marriage

It appears that stress emanating from the workplace is linked to marital instability via both direct and indirect negative effects on individual and family functioning (e.g., Barnett, 1998; Clark, 2000; Duxbury & Higgins, 2003; Kelloway & Barling, 1995; Matthews, Conger, & Wickrama, 1996; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999; Phillips-Miller, Campbell, & Morrison, 2000; White & Keith, 1990). Once again, the majority of researchers have focused on general, negative effects of work and family conflict (e.g., Barnett, 1998; Clark, 2000; Mauno & Kinnunen, 1999). Undeniably, there may be negative spillover between the work and family domains; however, there is also a possibility that positive interactions between work and family may occur, and the latter has received proportionately less research attention (e.g., Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

1.3.1 Perspectives on the Work-Home Interface

As Grosswald (2003) summarised, many researchers exploring the connection between work and family over the past 20 years have concentrated on which model or models illustrate the best connection between the two domains. Primarily, researchers have focussed on the "spillover" model between work and home, in which it is hypothesised that one domain (i.e., either job or home) can influence the other in either a positive or negative way (see Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Relatedly, researchers have also described the "crossover" phenomenon, in which stress experienced in the workplace by one individual leads to stress being experienced by the individual's spouse at home (see Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Wethington, 1989; Westman, 2001). Concurrently, researchers have also concentrated on the role "conflict" model, in that demands associated with one domain are incompatible with demands associated with the other domain (see Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998).

In general, this work-home relationship has been conceptualised as bidirectional (e.g., Frone, Russel, & Cooper, 1992; Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). Overall, however, the negative spillover effects of work on home life appear to be much stronger than the negative effects of home life on work (Allen et al., 2000; Frone et al., 1992; Jones & Fletcher, 1996; Leiter & Durup, 1996).

1.3.1.1 Work-to-Home Connection

Researchers have identified specific aspects of jobs (usually as perceived by the male) that contribute to the spouses' well-being and the marital relationship. These include levels of male partner's role ambiguity (Morrison & Clements, 1997), job-related pressures and demands (Barnett & Brennan, 1997; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000), flexibility

and autonomy within the work itself (Bailyn, 1997; Bakker, Demerouti, & Euwema, 2005; Clark, 2000; Grzywacz & Butler, 2005), reports of supportive supervisors at work (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Hammer, Cullen, Neal, Sinclair, & Shafiro, 2005), the support of co-workers for family matters (Schwartz, 1994), and life role values (i.e., roles that are deemed as having the highest priority) (Carlson & Kacmar, 2000; Greenhaus, Parasuraman, & Collins, 2001; Hochschild, 1997). As well, rotational shift work has been identified as having significant potential detriments on marital and home life (e.g., Akerstedt, 1990; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Hossain & Shapiro, 1999; Khaleque, 1999; Kinnunen & Mauno, 1998; Simon, 1990; Stark[-Adamec], 1995; White & Keith, 1990). In fact, Grosswald (2003) recently reported that rotational shiftwork in particular showed a significant, strong, positive relationship to high negative work-to-family spillover.

Researchers have also recently noted that the experiences during a workday inevitably "come home", and that this experience might be different for men and women. Schultz and colleagues (2004) reported that more negatively arousing workdays were linked with angrier marital behaviour for women and less angry and more withdrawn behaviour for men. Men's and women's responses at home to difficult work-day experiences, especially work overloads, may also be influenced by differences in their family roles (Almeida & Kessler, 1998). For example, women may still be expected to function as the primary caretaker of the children and be responsible for dinner after a workday, which may limit their ability to "withdraw".

The growing number of dual-earner couples has also been identified as exacerbating the work-home interaction, particularly from a conflict perspective (Guest,

2001). Interestingly, employed wives have a greater say in marital decision making than do unemployed wives (e.g., Steil, 2001); however, husbands of employed women do not significantly increase their participation in domestic tasks (e.g., Burke, 2000; Chadwick & Heaton, 1999; Coltrane, 1996; South & Spitze, 1994; Steil, 2001; Steil & Weltman, 1991; Wood, 2000). Thus, understandably, as the conflict between work and family roles increases, satisfaction with a dual-career lifestyle is directly affected (Perrone & Worthington, 2001). Generally, most members of dual-career couples agree that relationship equity benefits both husbands and wives (Rosenbluth, Steil, & Whitcomb, 1998). As Phillips-Miller and colleagues (2000) found, couples who appear to be most successful in establishing equity in the division of labour at home were those who created new notions of gender that allowed for change in traditional social roles (similar to Stafford and Canary's [1991] maintenance strategy of sharing tasks). Further, Cappelli and colleagues (2000) reported that those who place priority on a solid home life are more likely to be provided with balance and stability that helps offset the strain of workplace difficulties.

1.3.1.2 Home-to-Work Connection

Despite the claim of the bidirectional nature of the work-home interface, Perry-Jenkins, Repetti, and Crouter (2000) have pointed out that few researchers have explored how families shape behaviour in the workplace. Rothausen (1999) concluded that family is emerging as a significant source of explaining individuals' work attitudes and behaviours, including job satisfaction and intention to quit (Allen et al., 2000; Greenhaus, et al., 2001; Kelloway, Gottlieb, & Barham, 1999; MacEwen & Barling, 1994; Rothausen, 1994). Additionally, work performance has been found to decrease (Frone et

al., 1997; Lobel & St. Clair, 1992), mood at work has reportedly been more negative (Williams & Alliger, 1994), and increased absenteeism has been reported (Zaccaro, Craig, & Quinn, 1991) when difficulties at home have been identified.

1.3.2 Coping with the Work-Home Interface

Mauno and Kinnunen (1999) concluded that couples' ability to discuss job-related problems with each other worked to inhibit the crossover of negative emotions between work and home. In particular, it has been found that a supportive marital relationship may buffer the negative effects of job stressors, acting as a "positive spillover" into work (Repetti, 1998; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

More attention, however, has been directed to how couples cope in an unhealthy manner when work stress permeates into home life. For example, Repetti and colleagues (1994; Repetti & Wood, 1997) reported that employed spouses tend to withdraw from family interaction following high stress days at work. Some have suggested that this could be an important coping mechanism in that solitary time buffers the transmission of negative emotions (Larson & Gillman, 1999). Over time, however, repeated instances of withdrawal may lead to feelings of resentment on the part of the spouse (Repetti & Wood, 1997), similar to Gottman's (1994) suggestion of negative affect reciprocity. It has been found that programmes aimed at building supportive work environments and promoting emotionally close family relationships, endorsed from an organisational perspective, may help to reduce work-family conflict (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000).

Although it appears as though researchers have paid little attention to the factors that enable couples to balance work and home conflicts, Forthofer and colleagues (1996) noted that interventions designed to decrease marital conflict may have the side benefit of

lowering employers' costs due to work loss and absenteeism. Others have described the effectiveness of Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) in helping to manage personal conflict (Leiter & Durup, 1996).

As Perry-Jenkins and colleagues (2000) noted in their review of the work and family literature, a strategic first step towards understanding the complexity of work and family dynamics is to focus on an exemplar occupation, such as a high-stress occupation, that is likely to produce daily fluctuations in challenges and demands. The identification of a participant population that experiences a considerable amount of stress, but also maintains a very high marriage rate, led us to consider the lives and job characteristics of police officer marriages.

1.4 Policing

Facing dangerous situations, working in challenging postings, dealing with criticism and complaints of the public and the media, exposure to death and carnage, and operating under severe time pressures have all been identified as adverse features of police work (e.g., Anshel, Robertson, & Caputi, 1997; McCafferty, McCafferty, & McCafferty, 1992; Roberts & Levenson, 2001; Sims & Sims, 1998; Stark, 1999; Thompson, Kirk-Brown, & Brown, 2001; Violanti, 1993; Violanti & Aron, 1995). Policing is also a unique profession involving many factors, including rotational shift work, job unpredictability, and high stress, which traditionally have been found to give rise to work and family conflict (e.g., Alexander & Walker, 1996; Anshel et al., 1997; Brooks & Piquero, 1998; Burke, 1993, 1994; Gentz & Taylor, 1994; Sims & Sims, 1998; Violanti & Aron, 1995). For example, married officers, compared to single officers, have reported more difficulty with stress relating to the public and human suffering aspects of

their jobs, perhaps because they are more apt to relate the situations to their own families (Brooks & Piquero, 1998; Lowenstein, 1999). As well, female police officers may experience qualitatively different sources of stress from those of their male counterparts (Austin, 1996; Goodwin, 1999; Heidensohn, 1992; Stolwerk, 1990).

1.4.1 Police Marriages

Police officer marriages became the subject of investigation in the mid 1970s, when, for the first time, the family was considered as potential recipients of the sequelae of police work (e.g., Cherry & Lester, 1979; Durner, Kroeher, Miller, & Reynolds, 1975; Reiser, 1974; Rogers, 1977; Stratton, 1975). Recently, researchers have begun to identify that the spouses of police officers experience significant disruption as a result of their partner's occupation, including long and often inopportune hours of work, family disruption due to rotational shift work, anxieties associated with the physical dangers of the job and potential line-of-duty death, fear for their own safety, lack of support for the family from police administration, and intense public scrutiny (e.g., Aharon, 1984; Alexander & Walker, 1996; Bell, 1988; Gentz & Taylor, 1994; Gist & Taylor, 1996; Inwald, Gebbia, & Resko, 1994; Kirschman, 1997; Scrivner & Reese, 1994; Stark[-Adamec], 1995; Stone, 1999). Spouses of police officers exposed to trauma can sometimes become "vicariously traumatised" by reliving their marital partner's on-the-job experiences (e.g., Nelson & Wright, 1996). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the after-effects of trauma can "prime, intensify, and exacerbate marital distress" (Johnson & Williams-Keeler, 1998). Interestingly, however, researchers have found that neither police applicants, nor their families anticipate a high degree of work and family

conflict (Ryan, Kriska, West, & Sacco, 2001). This reality usually does not become apparent until after the officer's career begins.

Lack of stability in where they live is another source of stress for spouses whose marital partners are members of police forces in which they are required to transfer postings (e.g., Aharon, 1984; Kirschman, 1997; Stone, 1999); however, researchers have rarely explored the effects of these transitions. Within the sparse literature on this issue, it has been suggested that the transition for the officer may not be as difficult as it is for their family, since the officer is able to move from a familiar work situation to another familiar work situation. The rest of the family, however, is left with the burden of adjusting to an entirely new situation (e.g., Aharon, 1984; Stone, 1999).

Another difficulty facing those involved in police marriages may be related to communication. Police officers have noted that they tended to avoid discussing work stressors at home because of feelings that the spouse would not understand or would be distressed by such disclosures (Bradstreet, 1994; Thompson et al., 2001); when under stress (work-related or otherwise) officers are likely to stay close with their co-workers or to keep to themselves and adopt a self-protective pattern of becoming aloof (Evans, Coman, Stannely, & Burrows; 1993; Lowenstein, 1999). Further, Klein (1994) pointed out that, for police officers, communication is often even more difficult because communication that works well on the job, such as giving commands, issuing orders, and keeping feelings in abeyance, does not work in intimate relationships.

1.4.1.1 Dual Police Couples

A complex scenario, albeit one very rarely explored by researchers, is that of police officers married to other police officers. Chance (1988) completed a qualitative

study with five police couples, and most participants agreed that concern for the spouse's personal safety is lessened by the awareness of his or her training and capabilities, and they felt they could often discuss aspects of the job, knowing that their spouse understood. Interestingly, four of the five men interviewed had previously been married to "civilians" (Chance, 1988). Others have suggested that competition between married police officers may become dysfunctional, resulting in one partner seeking the companionship of another who is viewed as "weaker" (Schmuckler, 1994). It has been surmised that there can be problems if both members of the couple work in the same detachment or department, especially if one is of higher rank, leading to questions of favouritism and possible alienation of the lower-ranking spouse (Kirschman, 1997; Schmuckler, 1994). There is also the possibility of one spouse witnessing their marital partner in danger or being seriously injured on the job (Kirschman, 1997).

1.4.1.2 Marital Instability and Divorce in Police Marriages

Although numbers have recently begun to decline in North America, more than half of all first marriages in the general population are predicted to end in permanent separation or divorce (National Marriage Project, 1999; Rogers & Amato, 1997; Trovato, 2000). In Canada specifically, the majority of divorces occur among couples who have been married between 10 and 14 years (Trovato, 2000). There has been considerable controversy surrounding the incidence of divorce in police marriages. In 1975 Durner and colleagues identified divorce as a significant problem that accompanied police work, and Rogers (1977) later cited police marriage break-up rates as high as 70-80% in the first three years of marriage. More recently, Gentz and Taylor (1994), in a study of 244 police officers with at least 15 years experience, concluded that slightly more than half

reported at least one divorce, with the majority of them reporting that their career choice had contributed to their divorce. These divorce statistics have been refuted by many (e.g., Reiser, 1974; Terry, 1981), with the accurate objection that there are few empirical data in support of these claims. Interestingly, even without empirical research to support the notion, police officers and their spouses believe that they have a higher rate of divorce than the general public (Gentz & Taylor, 1994; Stone, 1999).

Conversely, there are presumably many police marriages that thrive. However, as with the biased focus in non-police marriage research, very little attention has been devoted to police marriages that remain intact, and most importantly, how couples manage to overcome the challenges and adversities of police life and maintain their marital relationship.

1.5 The Current Study

In a number of different areas of the literature, including those of marriage, work and marriage, and police marriages, researchers have repeatedly suggested that there is the lack of an inclusive model for understanding how work and family influence one another (e.g., Barnett, 1998; Gottman, 1998; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000). In the current context of examining marital relationships, there is a "burgeoning interest in qualitative research and a greater appreciation for its potential contributions to the understanding of close relationships" (Allen & Walker, 2000, p. 19), since so many dimensions of close relationships have yet to be examined in this rich and compelling way. Using in-depth, semi-structured interviews with spouses of police officers and police officers themselves, the goal was to create a better theoretical understanding of what is important in developing and maintaining a long-term marriage, in light of the stressors of police work.

Secondly, and equally as important, the information gathered from this study was used to develop potential recommendations and intervention strategies that may serve to promote the health and longevity of police marriages. Given the positive role played by social support in the reduction of stress, it was also hoped that a better understanding of the work and marriage relationship might have a positive impact upon officers' careers.

The nature and impact of police work on Canadian police marriages have not been well-explored in prior research. As a result, researchers have yet to develop an understanding of the relationship between police work and marriage, especially within Canada. Many research methodologists (e.g., Allen & Walker, 2000; Mertens, 1998; Patton, 1990) have suggested that qualitative approaches are appropriate when the researchers require detailed, in-depth information or when the focus of the study is on unique qualities of particular individuals. In order to allow for the development of an integrated working theory, grounded in the perceptions and experiences of police couples, a qualitative approach was adopted in the attainment of the research goals.

1.6 Why The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)?

As Joy Duncan (1974) writes, "a story of the wives of RCMP members is as old as the story of the Force itself..." (p. 17). However, RCMP officers and their spouses have received little empirical attention from researchers. Alexander and Walker (1996) noted that there have been a number of American researchers who have suggested that police work makes undesirable and substantial intrusions on family life. The authors point out, however, that there are problems in generalising the results to police services in other countries because of differences in culture, police philosophies, and practices. Secondly, the RCMP is particularly unique, as it is Canada's national police force and has

officers and their spouses posted across the nation. RCMP officers are trained in a single location, at the Training Academy, Depot Division ("T" Division) in Regina, Saskatchewan. Their training currently consists of an intensive five-month programme, during which time "cadets" are required to live with their fellow troop mates at Depot. Prior to their official graduation, cadets meet with Staffing and are assigned their first posting, which they contractually agree can be anywhere in Canada. Subsequently, for the remainder of their careers, "Members" and their families are then transferred to a new posting, on average every three to five years, although sometimes posting durations can be longer (R. Roy, RCMP psychologist, personal communication, October 15, 2003).

On a personal note, I have had a number of experiences with the RCMP that I believe inspired me to pursue research with RCMP officers and their families. In particular, during my undergraduate degree in Alberta, I completed a full-time, 16-month internship with RCMP Health Services as a psychological and research assistant. I had the opportunity to spend time with officers all over the province and quickly gained an appreciation for the diversity of challenges that their job presents. During that time, I often wondered how police work affected their families. I was intrigued by the rich culture of the RCMP and often reflected on the attachment to the RCMP that I had developed, even after working with them for a relatively short time. In fact, these experiences prompted my own application to the RCMP at the same time that I applied to graduate school. Letting fate take its course, I was accepted to the University of Regina before receiving an official start date at Depot, and thus decided that a career in Psychology was where I was meant to be. Although I do not regret that decision, I have often wondered about how becoming an RCMP officer might have changed my life. One

of the benefits of training at the University of Regina, for me, was that I was also able to complete two clinical practica, during my doctoral degree, at Depot in Regina. I had the opportunity to interact with many of the cadets and to hear about their struggles, some of which included dealing with the stress of training while juggling the demands of their family. This further solidified my desire to understand their experiences and to explore the potential ways in which this process might be made easier. Finally, three years ago, a close family member of mine was accepted into the RCMP; he and his wife are currently at their first posting. Although they did not participate in the research, I have found it fascinating to hear about how they are experiencing many of the joys as well as the trials and tribulations that the participants in this study discussed. Thus, I believe that an interest to do research with RCMP officers and their families was sparked many years ago, and this project provided the perfect opportunity to explore some of those questions.

Considering the stressful nature of policing, examining the effects of police work on the police spouse and exploring ways in which spouses and officers have learned to cope with the effects of police work, while maintaining their marital relationships, seems overdue. Patton (1990) noted that qualitative methods are appropriate when the researcher requires detailed, in-depth information or when the focus of the study is on unique qualities of particular individuals. Thus, the primary goal of the current study was to gain a better understanding of relationships that occur within the context of policing as an occupation and the effects that this may or may not have on intimate relationships. Following from this, the secondary goal of the current study was to explore potential intervention strategies and perhaps policy changes that would serve to promote the health and longevity of RCMP marriages and possibly officers' careers.

CHAPTER 2: METHOD

Approval to undertake this study was received from the Research Ethics Board Committee of the University of Regina. The Research Ethics Board Committee approval is attached in Appendix A. Written consent was also provided by Superintendent Curt Tugnum of RCMP Depot Division, (see Appendix A).

2.1 Procedure

2.1.1 Interview Development

The semi-structured interview protocols were developed on the basis of a literature review in the areas of marital relationships, work and marriage, policing, and police marriages. Participants were told that the main purpose of the interview was to learn about their personal perspectives of being involved in a marriage in which one or both of the spouses is or was an RCMP officer. Both the police officers' and the spouses' interviews included demographic information and a brief marital history. The *spouse's interview* included (but was not limited to) (a) the experience of being a police spouse, (b) perspective regarding support from the Force, (c) coping with aspects of police work, (d) coping with aspects of long-term relationships, (e) what could be done to make the role of a police spouse "easier", and (f) what would be helpful for police spouses to know. The *officer's interview* was designed to cover similar topics, including (a) the experience of being a married police officer, (b) perspectives regarding support from the Force, (c) coping with and separating police work from home life, (d) coping with aspects of long-term relationships, (e) what could be done to make balancing the roles as a police officer and spouse "easier", and (f) what would be helpful for married police officers to know. General, guiding questions for the interviews can be found in Appendix B.

Additional non-scripted questions were asked in order to clarify participants' responses and/or to follow up on an issue raised by the interviewee. Participants were encouraged to allow their stories to unfold in their own words, and to introduce content that they judged to be important or relevant to the goals of the research. Furthermore, as is common practice in qualitative interviewing, the sequence and specific questions were modified during the course of the interviews to address the particular experiences of each participant, and in order to incorporate knowledge gained from preceding interviews (e.g., Mertens, 1998; Patton, 1990).

2.1.2 Recruitment of Participants

A copy of the proposal of this study was sent to the Commanding Officer (CO) of "T" Division (Depot), Superintendent Curt Tugnum. "T" Division is located in Regina, Saskatchewan and employs active duty Members. A meeting was arranged with the CO and the study was discussed in detail. CO Tugnum then sent out an information sheet (see Appendix C) to Members posted at Depot. Members and their spouses who were interested contacted me via telephone in order to receive further information about the study. Each Member and/or spouse who expressed interest in the study was invited to participate. All participants who contacted me were interviewed, except for one Member who was then at a northern post and was not available for a face-to-face interview.

A slightly different procedure was followed to involve retired Members and spouses of retired Members who are now living in Saskatchewan. I contacted Mr. Stan Martin, a retired Member and secretary of the RCMP Veteran's Association. He was provided with an information sheet (see Appendix C) on the research study and passed the information on during a meeting of the Veteran's Association. Again, retired

members and their spouses who were interested contacted me by telephone in order to receive more information about the study. Each Member and/or spouse who expressed interest in the study was invited to participate and all who contacted me were interviewed.

Finally, there were participants who became involved in the study after learning of the project from others who had participated. Some of these participants were posted in "K" Division (Alberta). Those who expressed an interest were also provided with an information sheet on the study (see Appendix C). Again, each Member and/or spouse who expressed interest in the study was invited to participate and all who contacted me were interviewed.

2.2 Participants

Participants included active or retired Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) officers and spouses of RCMP officers who were married. Developmental stages in marital relationships including (but not limited to) "newlyweds", "parenthood", the potential "remarriage", "retirement", and "the later years" present different challenges to couples. Thus, both active and retired Members and their spouses were recruited. Participation was limited to heterosexual couples. The potentially unique issues of homosexual relationships among police officers warrant a separate investigation that may be undertaken at a later date.

Eighteen individual interviews were conducted. Nine participants were female spouses of active or retired Members. The remaining nine participants were active or retired Members, two women and seven men. Fourteen of the 18 participants were married to each other. Of the remaining four participants, three spouses participated and

their officer spouses did not, and one officer participated and their spouse did not. One couple interviewed were both Members (in the analysis, these participants were both considered "officers"); the remaining participants involved the union of an officer and a civilian spouse. Participating Members' years of service ranged from 2 to 32 years and included ranks from Constable to Staff Sergeant. All participants except one were in their first marriage. Of the nine spouses interviewed, six married their partner after their spouse became a police officer. Of the nine Members interviewed, eight married their partners after they became police officers. The specific demographics of the participants are presented below (see Table 1).

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Age in Years		Years Married		Postings		Number of Children	
	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range	Average	Range
Spouses	43	26-55	21	4-35	5	1-8	2	0-3
Members	43	27-58	16	1-35	4	1-9	2	0-4

2.2.1 Collection and Organisation of Interview Responses

The interviews were conducted in private offices at the University of Regina and at homes of the Members and spouses throughout Saskatchewan and Alberta between October 25, 2002 and February 27, 2004. Before beginning the interviews, an Informed Consent Form in which the purpose, nature, and confidentiality of the research was outlined was reviewed with each participant (see Appendix D). Individuals were asked to sign the form if they agreed to participate and they were provided with a personal copy of

the form. Participants were also asked to give consent to have their interview audiotaped in order to record their comments accurately. All participants agreed to this and were asked to sign a second Informed Consent form for audiotaping (see Appendix D). Participants were also provided a personal copy of this form. Each interview was recorded on audiotapes bearing the confidential participant number assigned to that participant (therefore, names only appeared on the Informed Consent Forms and not on interview data). The length of the interviews varied from approximately one to two and a half hours, depending on how much the participants chose to say as well as time constraints for the participant.

The interviews were semi-structured dialogues designed to allow participants an opportunity to express their own insights into what might be involved in making a "police marriage" work, as well as many of the unique (and not so unique) issues faced by police officers and their spouses, in light of being employed by the RCMP. Many of the participants indicated that they had "never thought about" many of the questions asked and seemed to enjoy the opportunity to discuss their experiences.

Data analysis in qualitative studies is a non-mechanistic, ongoing process (Mertens, 1998). Following each interview, I transcribed participants' responses verbatim. Transcribing an interview is a lengthy process; every 30 minutes of recorded tape required at least three hours of transcription time, and each interview was often re-visited a number of times. The initial transcription of each interview was completed as soon as possible following an interview, as there is a greater possibility that aspects of the interview that the tape did not pick up clearly, such as mumbled words, would be more likely to be remembered. It is also the case that facial expressions and body language

that give contour and texture to the words would be more easily remembered immediately following an interview. After the initial transcription, each tape was reviewed and compared to the initial transcript in order to catch the inevitable errors (e.g., transposed words).

In order to ensure that it would be essentially impossible to recognise any individuals on the basis of quotations from their interviews, specific identifying details of participant responses were anonymised. Thus, no identifying features, such as names of individuals or posting locations, were recorded in the transcripts. Furthermore, all participants were given the opportunity to review their own transcript in order to check them for accuracy and to ensure that the transcripts were properly anonymised. Of the 18 interviews completed, seven chose to review their transcripts and 11 stated that it was not necessary. For those participants who requested to review their transcripts, a copy was mailed to them along with a cover letter (see Appendix E). A self-addressed stamped envelope was included so that the participants could mail their transcript back to me when they finished reviewing it. Of the seven transcripts mailed out, all were returned. These transcripts contained either no revisions or minor additions or deletions. These changes were made to the transcripts and then the audiotapes of the 18 interviews were erased as agreed upon with the participants. Those participants who did not wish to see their transcripts were also mailed a letter, indicating that their interview was transcribed and that they were still free to review their transcript if they wished (see Appendix E).

The names of all participants and their corresponding participant numbers were recorded on a master list. This list is kept in a locked filing cabinet at the University of

Regina. All data collected in this research are stored in a separate locked filing cabinet at the University of Regina.

2.3 Analysis

2.3.1 Computer Software

Once the interviews were transcribed, the initial phase of qualitative analysis was completed using the NVivo computer software package (Bazeley & Richards, 2002). This programme is designed to integrate coding with qualitative linking, shaping, and modeling and provides the researcher with an application for managing, tracking, and discovering patterns in large amounts of qualitative data. Although NVivo facilitates many of the activities involved in qualitative data analysis and interpretation of textual data, particularly selecting, coding, and annotation, the programme cannot automatically execute these activities; it requires active, ongoing participation of the researcher. Essentially, it was used as the initial organising tool to move quotes easily as ideas developed.

2.3.2 Interpretational Qualitative Analysis

Interpretational qualitative analysis (e.g., Tesch, 1990) was used to examine the interview responses and the constant comparative method (CCM; see Dye, Schatz, Rosenberg, & Coleman, 2000) was the specific method used to code and understand these data. Once the interviews were completed and transcribed, the analysis essentially occurred in the following interacting three steps: coding of the data, organising the coded data into concepts or themes, and finally selecting one main category and relating other subcategories to it (Dye, et al., 2000; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

More specifically, the first step of coding pertains to naming and categorising phenomena by using, as the smallest initial units of analysis, discrete words and phrases. Data were sorted and sifted through with a purpose of identifying and attaching a code name or descriptive label to similar phrases, relationships between variables, patterns, themes, distinct differences, and common sequences (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

These patterns, commonalties, and differences were then considered part of the second phase of data analysis (as described by Dye, et al., 2000; Mertens, 1998; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Here codes with similar content were grouped together in order to produce categories that had the maximal internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. This stage was conducted over and over again, reshaping the configuration of the data on a number of occasions.

The final stage of the analysis involved further grouping of categories in order to identify themes in the data, paying close attention to the interconnections of all categories. This process was also repeated a number of times to get a sense of the inter-relatedness and heterogeneity of categories and themes, with the purpose of constructing a general over-arching theme with multiple categories and sub-categories.

2.4 Quality Checks

Criteria for judging the "quality" of qualitative research that are comparable to the criteria for judging quantitative research have been summarized by Mertens (1998) as "quality checks". Many of these quality checks were employed during the data collection phase of our study. The **credibility** (or internal validity in quantitative research) was enhanced in this study by implementing four research strategies. The first strategy is *prolonged and substantial engagement.* Although there are no specified rules indicative

of how long a researcher must interact with participants, Mertens (1998) states that "when the researcher has confidence that themes and examples are repeating instead of extending, it may be time to [stop interviewing]" (p. 181). In the current study, themes and examples began to repeat near the end of the interviewing process. The second strategy is *peer debriefing*, in which it is suggested that the "researcher should engage in an extended discussion with a disinterested peer, of findings, conclusions, analysis, and hypotheses" (p. 182). This was done on repeated occasions throughout the data collection and analysis phases. I consulted with three colleagues working in our research laboratory who were conducting research in diverse areas. I also consulted with a senior graduate student from another university who had little background in policing or marital research. The third strategy is *progressive subjectivity*, in which it is suggested that the researcher pay close attention to their own developing constructions and engage in documenting this process. I found that it was essential for me to be aware of my own biases and ideas, formed during my previous experiences working with RCMP officers. I also had no experience with respect to being married; however, I quickly realised that I came in with my own ideas about what a "successful" marriage should entail. I learned very early in this process that one couple's definition of a long-term marriage was very different from another's, and both were different from mine. Given my past experience with the RCMP, I also discovered that I had my own ideas about what might be helpful for RCMP couples to do to maintain their marriage as well as the role that the Force might play in assisting its Members and their spouses. I made every effort to be aware of these biases and assumptions (fully acknowledging that a researcher can never truly be unbiased). I discussed my evolving ideas with my supervisor on an ongoing basis during

all phases of this project. I also recorded brief notes following each interview, including my perceptions and insights from each interview. Moreover, I found it helpful to keep a journal during the data analysis phase, especially during the initial overwhelming phase of analysis. Finally, *member checks* is identified by Mertens (1998) as the most important criterion in establishing credibility. This task was undertaken by providing participants with the opportunity to review their transcripts in order to check for accuracy as well as to add or delete comments. As mentioned earlier, seven of the 18 participants chose to do this. Participants were also provided with my contact information and were told that they could get in touch with me at any time if they thought of anything further that they would like to add or delete from their interview. None of the participants contacted me in this manner.

The following quality checks identified by Mertens (1998) were employed during the analysis phase of the study. **Transferability** is identified as the qualitative parallel of external validity, or the degree to which the results can be generalised. Although it has been suggested that qualitative findings are best generalisable to the development of theories and not wider populations (Winter, 2000), Mertens (1998) points out that, "in qualitative research, the burden of transferability is on the reader to determine the degree of similarity between the study site and the receiving context. The researcher's responsibility is to provide sufficient detail to enable the reader to make such a judgement" (p. 183). It is suggested that this can be done by the researcher providing a "thick description" of the time, place, culture, and context of the collected data. Although for confidentiality reasons I am unable to provide specific descriptions, the anonymised quotes provided by the participants reflect an in-depth and rich portrayal of

the culture of the RCMP and what it is like to develop and maintain marital and familial relationships within this culture. Additionally, the use of *multiple cases* (18 in this study) of both active and retired Members and their spouses is helpful in strengthening the transferability of the results.

Dependability is identified as the qualitative parallel to the reliability or the stability over time. Although Mertens (1998) points out that a change of focus in qualitative research is acceptable and to be expected, she suggests that a "*dependability audit*" can be employed to attest to the quality and appropriateness of the inquiry process. In order to satisfy this requirement, a dependability audit for the interviews was conducted with my dissertation advisor and with a fellow University of Regina graduate student during the data collection phase. The modifications of the interviews were discussed with my supervisor and with the other student in order to determine whether these changes were appropriate. For example, as the interviews progressed, one spousal participant discussed strategies that she might suggest to future police spouses. In determining whether this might be an appropriate question to ask participants in future interviews, this was first discussed with my supervisor and my colleague.

Confirmability is the qualitative parallel to objectivity, which is in place to ensure that the influence of the researcher's judgement is minimized. Mertens (1998) identifies the importance of a *confirmability audit* "to attest to the fact that data can be traced to original sources and that the process of synthesizing data to reach conclusions can be confirmed" (p. 184). A fellow senior graduate student from another university, my dissertation advisor, and an RCMP spouse and Member who were not involved in the initial stages of the study independently conducted audits on these data. These audits

consisted of reviewing the data analysis to see whether the groupings of elements and codes were logical. My dissertation advisor and the student also reviewed anonymised transcripts of interviews in order to ensure that the results of the analyses "made sense" with respect to what was actually said by the participants.

As a result of the above quality checks, these data appear to be a credible, transferable, dependable, and confirmable representation of the participants' perceptions.

2.5 Implementing the Analysis

Before the first phase of the analysis began, the 18 transcripts were divided into two groups, the officers and the spouses. It should be noted that two of the interviews were not transcribed in entirety, due to technical recording difficulties during the interviews. Detailed notes were made after both of these interviews and these descriptions were referenced during data analysis. Transcripts from both groups of interviews (i.e., officers and spouses) were loaded into the NVivo qualitative data analysis programme (Bazeley & Richards, 2002). This was used as the initial organising tool during the coding phase of the analysis to move codes easily as ideas developed. During the first phase of the analysis, I reviewed each interview, word by word. The interview quotes that were most relevant to the research question or were of particular concern to the participants were identified. A "Master Code" of quotes and categories for the spouses and for the officers respectively was formed progressively as I went through each interview. In the coding of the officers' interviews, 477 quotes were divided into 206 categories. In the coding of the spouses' interviews, 860 quotes were divided into 376 categories. The category names were generally derived from terms used by the participants. Next, a computerised list of the 477 quotes for the officers and the 860

quotes for the spouses (with their corresponding category names) was printed. The officer quotes were printed on blue paper and the spouse quotes were printed on white paper so that the origin of the code could be easily identified. Each quote was also labelled with a number so that it could be traced back to the original interview, as it was often necessary to refer to the context in which the quote was taken. Each quote was cut out with scissors and was placed into its corresponding category pile.

The second phase of the analysis involved grouping the 477 officer quotes and the 860 spouse quotes into one pile. Once again, quotes with similar content were combined. During this process, original quotes from the first phase were sometimes cut into smaller statements, resulting in a final total number of 1588 quotes divided into 209 categories.

The third phase of analysis involved repeated attempts at grouping categories together into clusters (titled sub-constructs) that again maximised internal homogeneity and external heterogeneity. A total of 65 sub-constructs emerged, representative of the relationships among the 209 categories. This process of identifying similarities, and grouping sets of elements together, was repeated three more times to produce, respectively, 21 constructs, seven super-constructs, and then two main themes.

In the final phase of the analysis, these two main themes were brought together under one overarching theme, called the unifying concept, representative of the themes, super-constructs, constructs, sub-constructs, categories, and quotes subsumed beneath it (see Figure 1). The descriptive labels that were assigned at each level of analysis were generated through consultation with colleagues and my dissertation advisor. Within the following sections, the 21 constructs, the seven super-constructs, the two main themes, and the unifying concept will be discussed in detail.

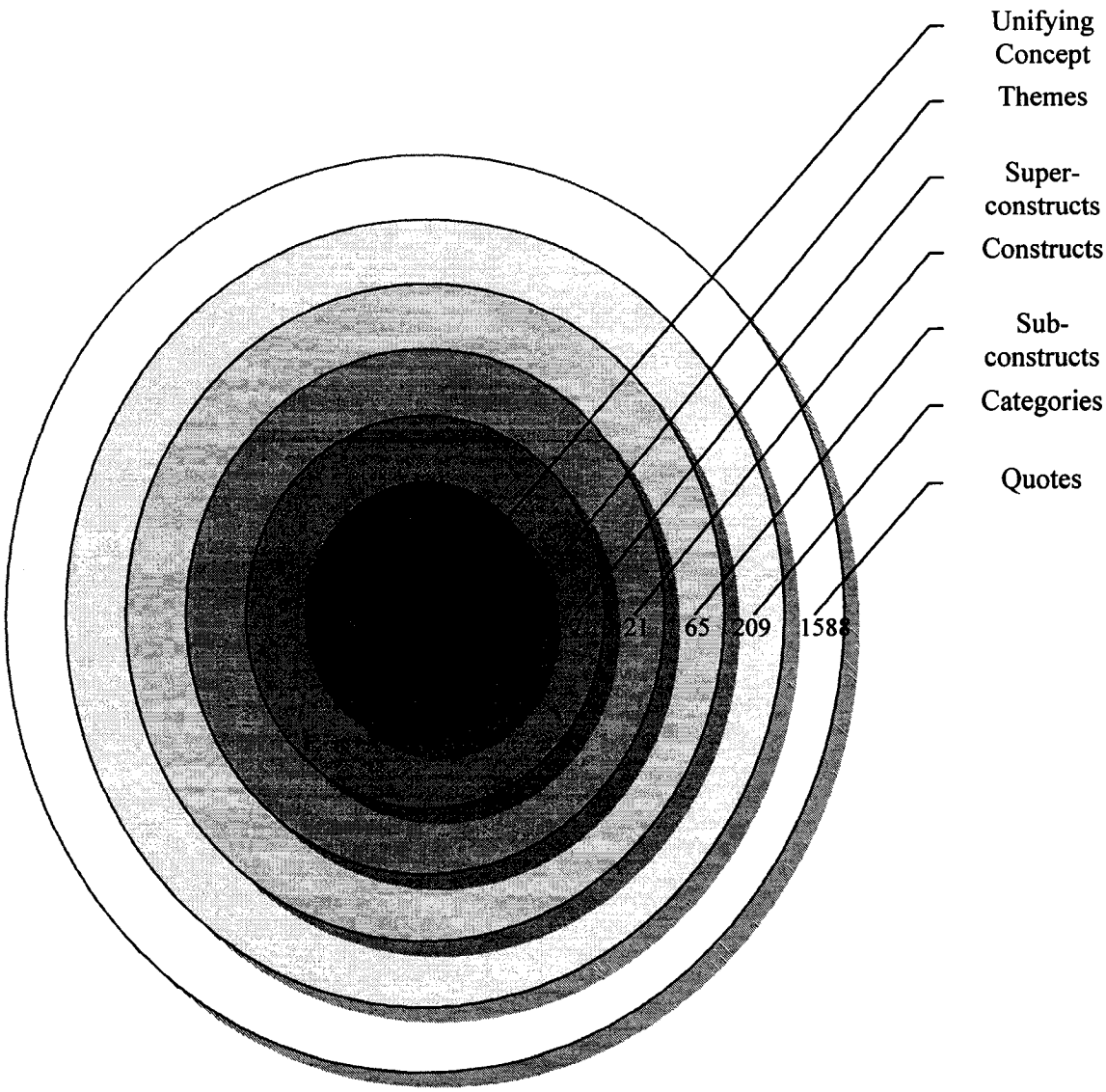

Figure 1. Levels of Analysis

2.6 Excerpts from the Interviews

It should be noted that although presenting the data from the spouses' and the officers' analyses separately was considered, for a number of reasons it seemed more appropriate to present their responses as integrated. Primarily, it became obvious in the early stages of this research that a "partnership necessity" was required in maintaining marital relationships within the policing context. Thus, by combining the quotes, a more comprehensive picture was presented in terms of all that is required, *by both partners,* to be involved in a marriage in which the partners stay together. Within the context of combining the quotes from both participant groups, the specific challenges and experiences of those in the respective roles of police officer and spouse are still represented; these challenges and experiences are simply considered in the larger context of a "police marriage".

Excerpts from the interviews (i.e., quotes) will be presented as illustrations of the different levels of analysis (e.g., themes, constructs). Nonessential or identifying details have been omitted from quotes in order to ensure confidentiality. The quotes chosen for representation were judged to be particularly representative of the comments made by participants. Unfortunately, space constraints preclude the inclusion of all 1588 quotes used in the analysis.

The quotes included here were reproduced verbatim, so "colourful language" appears occasionally within the quotes. The appearance of **bolded** words within the quotes represents particular words that the participants emphasised in their statements. The appearance of squared bracket (i.e., [ ]) within the quotes represents either the deletion of information to ensure anonymity or the addition of information to clarify the

participants' responses. All quotes are also presented as block quotes (i.e., indented and single spaced), regardless of the length of the quote, so that the data can be easily identified.

The Results and Discussion sections are combined in this final component of the dissertation. I found, initially, when formulating a Results section, that the data often required a context, along with further explanation. Rather than being awkwardly redundant, I opted to combine the Results and Discussion sections to enhance readability.

CHAPTER 3: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Introduction. The Elements of and Strategies for Maintaining an RCMP Marriage

The original goal of this study was to develop, from the perspective of those who have been there, a clearer theoretical understanding of what factors contribute to the development and maintenance of a successful marriage, in light of the stressors of police work. As illustrated in Figure 2, 21 constructs, seven super-constructs, two main themes, and one unifying concept emerged from this study, representative of participants' experiences and insights of being involved in a marriage in which one or both Members are RCMP officers. For ease of presentation, the constructs that make up one of the themes, ***RCMP Marriage is Like No Other: The Effecting and Affected Components***, will be discussed first. Participants identified these as the components that both shape and have an impact on those involved in a "police marriage". Each section of the diagram that formulates this theme (i.e., the super-constructs and the constructs), along with the sub-constructs associated with each of the constructs, will be discussed in turn. The other theme ***Staying Together: What it Takes and What We Need*** is reflective of many of the insights and strategies that participants indicated they use to maintain their marriage or to cope with some of the challenges that they identified within the first theme. This second theme will be presented and discussed in a similar fashion. The unifying concept that unites these two themes, ***Searching for the Balance***, will then be discussed.

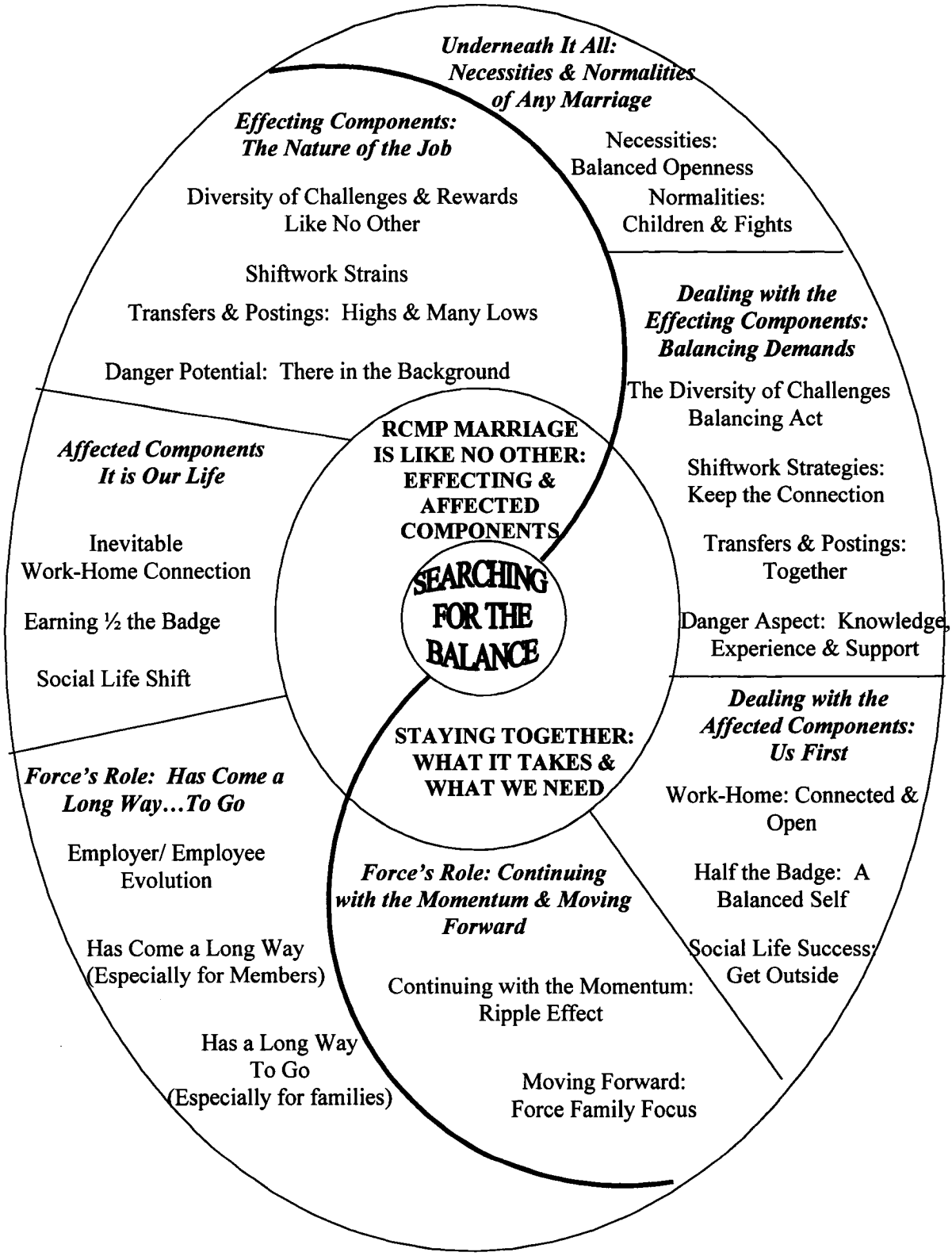

Figure 2. Elements of and Strategies for Maintaining an RCMP Marriage Emerging from Interviews with RCMP Officers and Spouses

3.2 Theme One: RCMP Marriage is Like No Other: The Effecting and Affected Components—Sub-Constructs and Constructs

The first of the two themes that emerged from the participants' responses was entitled ***RCMP Marriage is Like No Other: The Effecting and Affected Components***. This theme was made up of three super-constructs, labelled *Effecting Components: The Demanding Nature of the Job*, *Affected Components: It is Our Life*, and *The Force's Role: Has Come A Long Way...To Go.* Within this theme, participants identified a number of challenges and issues that they suggested contributed to making an "RCMP marriage" unique. Specifically, some aspects of the job emerged as the "effecting" components—the parts of the job that have an impact on the marital relationship. There were also aspects of their relationships that were identified as having been "affected" by RCMP work. Separate from both of these, although still contributing to the unique nature of their marriage, was the role that participants viewed the Force as having in the context of their lives and their marriages.

3.2.1 Super-Construct: The Effecting Components: The Demanding Nature of the Job

The four constructs that best capture the aspects of the job that participants identified as having an effect on their marriage included *Diversity of Challenges and Rewards Like No Other, Shiftwork Strains, Transfers and Postings: The Highs and Many Lows,* and *Danger Potential: There in the Background* (see Figure 3). What appears to capture the content of these constructs are the demands of the job of policing plus the expectations of the employer (see Table 2).

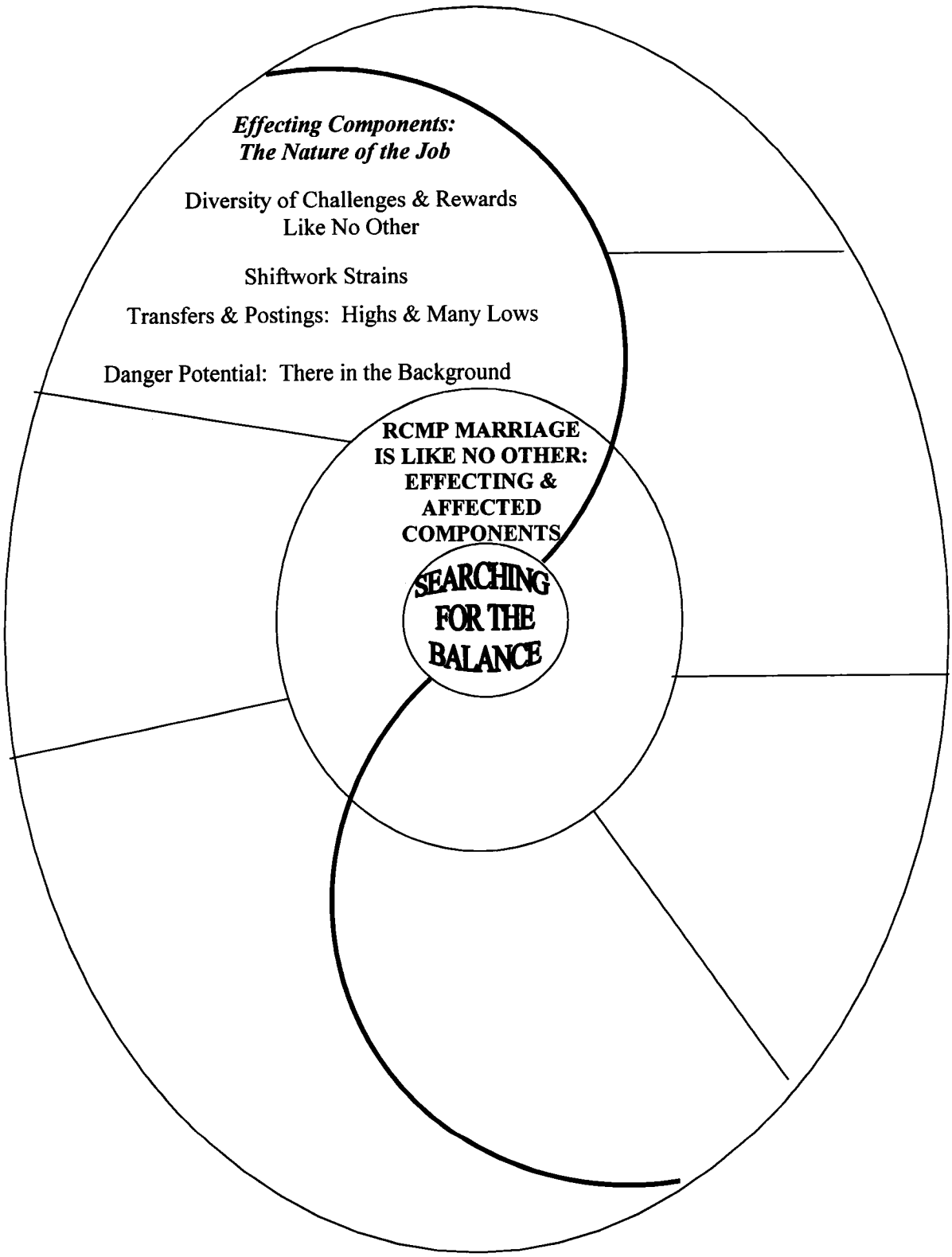

Figure 3. Effecting Components: The Nature of the Job

Table 2

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "Effecting Components: The Demanding Nature of the Job"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
The Effecting Components: The Demanding Nature of the Job	Diversity of Challenges and Rewards Like No Other	The Culture
		The Rewards
		Demanding Nature
		Female Member Challenges
	Shiftwork Strains	Significant Shiftwork Stress
		One Benefit
	Transfers and Postings: The Highs and Many Lows	Dual Depot Dedication
		Each Posting's Unique Challenges
		That First Posting: Entering the Great Unknown
		Rural Post Challenges
		Isolated (Northern) Post Challenges
		Re-Starting Benefits
		Uprooting Challenges
	Danger Potential: There in the Background	Always There in the Background
		Dangerous Situations

3.2.1.1 Construct: Diversity of Challenges and Rewards like No Other

Within this construct, participants outlined components of the job that make it unique among professions as well as distinctive from policing with other police forces. There is much history associated with the RCMP and the significance of 'The Red Serge' (see Kelly & Kelly, 1973). The RCMP is also viewed as distinctive in many respects, as it is the only national police force in North America. Member participants, in particular, highlighted how the profession is made up of individuals functioning within *The Culture*

of the RCMP. For example, Members who participated in this study discussed the pride that they took in being RCMP officers, which was reflective of their dedication and passion for the job.

> You know—I didn't want to be a police officer, I wanted to be a Mountie. I wanted to be in the RCMP. I think a lot of people can understand that. It's not about being a police officer. It's about being an RCMP. Although I go, "Well, I guess I could always go to [name of city] Police Service, they'd take me". But now, you're no longer what you wanted to be. You're doing the same job, but you're not what you wanted to be.

> I think most Members carry that [pride in being a Mountie]. I think most Members feel that way. I think that that's where, it's not so much I'm trying to do a good job, it's more I just wear the job in the sense of I know that people, when they call, they need the police to come and help. And that's the responsibility of doing the job properly.

Associated with the dedication to the job was the fact that many participants, particularly Members, described receiving many *Rewards* as a result of their career choice. Many Member participants noted that they could not see themselves doing "anything else", as their job provided them with many positive challenges.

> You get something out of every place you go to. It is a great job.

> Really, there's nothing else too much that I can say. I really like my job. I can't see myself really doing anything else.

> As far as the job goes, and part of what brought me into the Outfit, was that it has such a diverse spectrum of challenges. And those challenges can be as simple as going to somebody who's having problems with their neighbour over a dog coming into their yard to crap on their front lawn to somebody who's just lost their kid in a motor vehicle accident and you've got to go tell them that their kid is dead. Or you've got to go and pick their kid up out of the ditch with parts and pieces falling off because of the accident. There's a lot of challenges.

Participants also indicated that there was security within the profession, by way of continued job availability and consequent financial security.

> Job security. That's huge, that's awesome. I know so many people who worry about jobs, where they're going to live and that sort of thing. And although we wonder and kind of worry about where we're going next, you never worry about work or that when you do go somewhere, when you do, you'd be taken care of.
>
> And it's [the job] given him more, both of us, more financial security. And with the retirement with a full pension in 25 years, that's just wonderful. You don't see that everywhere. And he wouldn't have that as a farmer. He'd be working for the rest of his life. And yeah, there's stress here [in the RCMP], but I think there's just as much stress there [in his previous job as a farmer] too.

Conversely, many participants also discussed the numerous stressful challenges in being employed by the RCMP. In particular, the *Demanding Nature* of the job was identified as setting the RCMP apart from many professions, primarily because of its profound influence on the family. Participants highlighted the high degree of dedication that the organisation demands from its Membership. In particular, participants described the significant expectations of loyalty to the Force that often resulted in the need to make sacrifices at the family level.

> To get far in the Force, you have to make a lot of sacrifices. Oh absolutely. Some people have made some huge sacrifices to get far. And if you got up to be a Commissioned Officer, you definitely deserve it, because you **and** your family have made lots of sacrifices, for sure.
>
> The RCMP, the organisation, it will suck you dry if you let it. My husband loves his job. He would never be doing anything else, he just absolutely loves it. But, it will suck you dry if you let it, it will take what it can from you.
>
> I don't know about on your marriage, but on your life it [the RCMP] certainly does [have an influence] [laughs]. And I guess that affects your marriage too. The Force takes a lot out of you.
>
> Oh yes, for sure. That [loyalty to the Force] all ties in with working over time, working long hours, and going out [being called out on duty] on your day off, cancelling holidays because something big has happened. I mean, all those things have happened a number of times.

Further related to the *Demanding Nature*, participants outlined specific components of the job that epitomised the demands placed upon them. For instance, participants described the fact that they are often "on call".

> Especially I found in small detachments when you're on call all the time [the job is particularly demanding]. Like up in [name of northern post], it was hard. It was good that we didn't have kids because it would have been difficult with both of us working. There was only five Members up there, really four and a sergeant. And we were basically half of the working force, so we were on call half of the time. And there was a lot of on-call hours. We were getting called all of the time to go out here and there. It was tough. You find that you don't sleep well anymore because you're waiting for that phone to ring. It's pretty miserable.

> I suppose, I guess the worst time has been when he was in the [name] section. He was on call quite a bit. And I know this one time we wanted to go camping on the weekend. We went camping out to some lake. As it worked out, the spots were pretty well all gone, but he knew the guy who was looking after the camp ground. And they let us park in the parking lot. But the reason that they did that was because we parked beside a pay telephone, because he was on call. And I mean this was before pagers and cell phones. So, our campground is right by the pay telephone in case he needs to be called out, he can.

> He's been on call quite a bit for different things over the years and I don't know. I think when he was on the [name] section, it probably bothered me more. Because everything was on call. You're on call all the time. It was your life.

As well, the concept that a police officer wears the badge "24-7" was identified as another demanding element of the job. Participants pointed out that police officers are never completely "off duty". This became even more of an issue in the smaller, rural detachments. Participants indicated that they were always viewed as a police officer, even when they were away from the job.

> Especially in the smaller communities, wherever you go, it's there [public awareness of your police officer role]. It's there, because he is a Member of the RCMP in these communities. That's the status, I'm calling it a status, but this is his status in that community. So, wherever you go, it's there. So, you can't really dissipate that; it's there.

> People always recognise you as a police officer, whatever you're doing, so you always feel like you're expected to act a certain way. If you catch somebody doing something, yeah, you're compelled to do something. Otherwise, if you're off duty and you see your buddy go off and drink and drive, you lose your credibility. You can't get back to work and enforce it one day and then not enforce it the next. That's just wrong. It is. You're a Member 24 hours a day. It doesn't matter if you're working or not. Especially in a small town.
>
> You can be called out at any time. Like, in this community, basically we're responsible for policing 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. So, you always know that the job is connected to you. Even though I'm away from the job site, I could still be called out. If I was working in a bank, I know that I'm not going to be called out, unless my bank is burning down, but how often does that happen?

Female Member participants highlighted challenges of the job that were particularly tough for them. The specific issues that female RCMP officers face with respect to marital and family issues has been the focus of much more in-depth investigations (e.g., see Goodwin, 1999). In the current study, female Member participants noted that they struggled with balancing the desire to devote time to their children with dedication to their career. They also described the difficulties related to the necessity of parental leave (an issue not often faced by male Members).

> I know one of the Members made a comment, "Oh, you'll be having your second child a year after the first one". OK, the standard is you have your two kids two years apart. So I want to have my first child, and I guess I would be pregnant my first year back at work, so I would have my kids two years apart. But, I also get tired of that. Is he mocking me? Is he being cynical. Like, you already had your kids. Who really cares when I have mine. There shouldn't be any bets on when I have my child. Can I please have the first one healthy first?
>
> I think we both got well established in the Force. I had about 10 years service when we had [1st child's name], so I felt I had done OK. I hadn't been in the Service one year and gone on leave. Because, everyone feels a bit guilty about going on leave. It is a bitter point with a lot of Members because it puts the Detachment in a bad position. Especially if it was a small one. I'm still technically posted at [name of last posting - city], so

> [name of last posting] won't miss me so much. But in a small place, that puts a lot of strain on the other Members.

3.2.1.2 Construct: Shiftwork Strains

Rotational shiftwork is a characteristic job requirement of police work because, as one participant described, "most crime, most work for a policeman doesn't happen between 9 and 5". As other researchers have pointed out, those involved in rotational shiftworking occupations experience a number of challenges, including significant disruptions in marital and family life (e.g., Grosswald, 2003; Hossain & Shapiro, 1999; Khaleque, 1999; Presser, 2004; Stark[-Adamec], 1995). Participants in the current study also identified shiftwork as a significant stressor on their marriage. Many participants noted that *Shiftwork Strains* were most significant at the beginning of their careers with the Force.

> Shiftwork is horrible.
>
> The worst part? OK, again we could look at the shiftwork.
>
> It was just hard [working shiftwork]. It just sucked walking out the door [laughs]. It was equally hard just sleeping, and knowing that they [her husband and daughter] were up enjoying the day, and I had to sleep. And I didn't like it when he [her husband] worked it [shiftwork] either—it was tough. Yeah. The shiftwork, all the way around, is hard, for either party.

Participants identified never being home with their spouse, as well as having few weekends off together, as significant shiftwork-related concerns. These concerns appeared to be particularly poignant early in their marriage when many had a young family to care for.

> And the down side, especially with younger Members, they tend to work a lot of shiftwork and that is difficult when you got a young family and, especially if you're working yourself during the day, you come home at night you don't see each other, you just cross paths and that's it. You're lucky if you cross paths. So, I'd say that's a down side.

> And with us, with me just having worked shiftwork, it was really tough because [husband's name] had to be with [daughter's name] the whole time and when you're moving around, you're not necessarily with your family, so it's just your nuclear family that kind of has to take care of each other. If you're working shiftwork, whether it's the man or the woman, it could be really tough that way because there's no outlet. If it's the weekend, and you have the weekend off and your spouse is working shiftwork, then it really takes away from the family aspect of it too.
>
> But, for the most part I had one weekend off a month and you just prayed that it would be a great weekend—it wouldn't rain. And that was your big highlight of the month—your one weekend off.

As well, missing family functions was described as a frustrating consequence of working shiftwork, and this difficulty was sometimes exacerbated if the Member was also on call (a reportedly common experience).

> [Wife's name] would always go to birthday parties by herself, she would always arrange everything by herself. I would drop in—in uniform—at home, if I could.
>
> And it's sort of disgusting too—I mean it's not just 11 o'clock at night. Say that they're supposed to be done at 5 o'clock and you're waiting supper and it's somebody's birthday, and they don't get home, they don't get home. Or it's Christmas Day and they don't get home, they don't get home. There's lots of times when those kinds of things happen and if you can't deal with that, then you're miserable. Your whole family is miserable.

Further, it was noted that having children often resulted in a significant amount of adjusting schedules around rotating shifts to allow for childcare and responsibilities at home.

> If I kind of switch with him, and think of him being in the shiftwork again, it will be hard with [daughter's name], and having to keep the kids quiet, and different things like that—while they're sleeping.
>
> Before [1st child's name] came along, we put in so much voluntary overtime, to try and catch up and try and have the files in good shape so the next time you came on shift, you're not overwhelmed with calls coming in and still have to do the old work. We really had to stop, we had

> to bring things home to catch up on things, or you got to leave it there. Because, we had a babysitter staying here for only a certain amount of time and say your other spouse wants to go in early and catch up on something else. Yeah. That was hard to juggle.

Many of the Members with more years of service did reach a point in their careers in which they were no longer required to work shiftwork. For example, some Members accepted administrative positions in Headquarters or were instructing at Depot. Many of them described this as a welcome time in their careers, as did the spouses.

> You can actually plan things. It's good, you can plan things for your evenings, you can actually plan what you're going to do two weeks down the road because you know your husband is going to be off and you can do something together. So that's been positive that way, as far as shiftwork is concerned. We can do things together—**you know, we can do it**. You know, we can go off to, whether it be Winnipeg or we can go off to whatever, two or three weeks down the road because you know he's going to be off. Even though with the shiftwork you know your schedule, but you never know when you're going to called in and this kind of thing. So that's been very positive, definitely very positive in the past few years.

> But, then after that [after husband was posted to a non-shiftwork position] it just sort of fell into place. And it's actually been wonderful. Because, other than when he goes out of town for court, he's around. He was around for suppers, weekends, hockey tournaments, ringette tournaments, brownie doos and church things. You know, all the things a family is involved in, he was mostly there for. He would miss the occasional thing because he was out of town, but it was easy to roll over that because he was here most of the time.

The "days off" factor was identified as the *One Benefit* of shiftwork, which sometimes meant being able to get errands done in the middle of the week or having extended weekends.

> But, I don't think it's really affected us that much, working the shifts. We made do—we went from there. The nice thing about those 12 hour shifts when you work them is the four days off.

3.2.1.3 Construct: Transfers and Postings: The Highs and Many Lows

One of the often-mentioned job requirements identified as having a significant effect on the police marriage was the issue of transfers and postings, an aspect that sets the RCMP apart from many city police forces. Even prior to the beginning of their career, cadets, along with those who have spouses at that stage, have to contend with the training academy experience at Depot in Regina, Saskatchewan. Depot is the necessary five- (previously six-) month training process during which many demands are placed on both partners, including financial strain as well as having to live apart.

> Definitely strengthened our marriage, him being in Depot for six months. That's a challenge in itself, being apart for six months. And, you learn to appreciate each other more. And you appreciate your times together that much more because they're further and further in between.
>
> But, I guess you never know until you're doing it. Like it all sounds not too bad—and I think even when a married couple decides—or their husband really wants to be a policeman and they put their six months aside out of their life. That means no money from him for those six months. Often he leaves them forever and comes here or sometimes they move here to some God awful little apartment. But I don't know if anybody's really prepared for that. A lot of concessions have to be made—by him, by her.
>
> I think I was telling you before, just when I went to Depot, I would have had more money saved up. Because that's a very stressful time in itself. We'd only been married for a year. You don't have a whole lot of savings when you're first married and starting out in life. It was tough. Scraping together $10 for the night was tough.

Both Members and spouses described significant and diverse challenges associated with transfers. A distinctive aspect of RCMP work is that even general duty Constables can have completely different experiences based on the location of their posting at any given time. Not only might the location be diverse, but also the requirements between positions varied greatly. All participants were able to list their

respective postings in detail and often recalled the diverse nature of their experiences within the construct that emerged as *Each Posting's Unique Challenges*.

> With the postings that we've been at, some have been large detachments, some have been small detachments and some have been isolated. Like, [name of Northern post] is a fly-in, isolated community and it's all primarily Native. They're good people. But it has its own challenges because you have to be self-reliant. You don't have assistance from, let's say, [name of Detachment]. Around here, we have all kinds of police officers around us. Whereas, [name of Northern post] you're by yourself, and if something happens, you're still by yourself. Doesn't matter what's doing. The closest backup is maybe four hours, by plane, to assist you. And by then, it's all over. So, I guess I like the challenge, but sometimes you can get more than what you want.

> I would think that it [the effect that a posting had on the family] would **definitely** depend on the kind of position, the kind of demands that are on that position in terms of travel, amount of danger. What does the Force expect from the Member for that position? Because, for the guys here at [name of current posting], there's no pressure, there's hardly any. And so, I could see where that could be really good for family life. It's Monday to Friday, they're home at 4:30 and all is good. They don't get called out at 3 o'clock in the morning.

> Yeah, there could never be a manual [for RCMP marriages]. You can't. Because every community is somewhat different. And big detachments are really different than smaller detachments. And we really noticed when we moved back from [name of posting]. [Name of province] life is a lot more easy going—people have a different attitude there. I don't know what it is—because the weather's nicer generally or what. But things are just a little bit more easy going out there.

Significant for nearly all of the participants was *That First Posting*. In fact, many participants referred to the challenges and experiences of their first transfer throughout the course of their interviews. Many mentioned that this was a time in their involvement with the RCMP that they had to learn the most, both as a Member and as a spouse. Of those who were married before their first posting, both partners identified the transitions and steep learning curves involved in adapting to their respective new roles.

> You don't know anything about moving, you don't know anything about your job, you don't know anything about finances [when you are a junior Member]. You're learning everything. It's like going to kindergarten again and learning everything right to grade 12. But you're supposed to know all that day one. And you learn a lot of stuff all on your own. People know it, but they don't tell you.
>
> Nobody tells you [what it is like to be transferred]. Unless you know somebody who's been in it for a while and they're honest about it, you don't realise how hard it is until you're in the middle of it.
>
> In the beginning [the first posting], you don't know what to expect. You don't know what you're going to go through.

Many spousal participants indicated that it was during their first posting that they realised the magnitude of the job and the responsibilities and expectations associated with the overlap between the job and their home life.

> I know when we moved to [name of northern detachment], that was our first transfer, and I was so shocked at how—my focus was on this move, our lives are changing totally, going away from all of our family and friends, to this totally isolated place, and I was amazed that [husband's name] had to go to work right away. And I was left to put the home together and sort of try and get my bearings by myself—I was really shocked by that.
>
> OK, again I can reflect back on the beginning of my husband's career. Loyalty to the Force, it was just all the time in the office, all the time and because he was just learning a new job and he was immersed in an environment there where he had to know everything. It was a small detachment and he was the undertaker, he was the dog catcher, he was absolutely everything. And he was more or less on call all the time, so that was a little bit of a strain, you know, **"I want attention too"** because there was no children around at that time.
>
> And sometimes I think the spouse feels left out—especially with the moving and things like that. There's just so much that goes on and the spouses are left to pick up the pieces and go "OK, well what now".

For Members, the transition from cadet to officer was also identified as a stressful process.

> And it's one thing when you're at Depot, thinking you're doing well, and then you come out in the real world and you start working and you think, "Holy, did I learn **anything** while I was going through"? So, it's a real learning process for the first year, I thought. And I'm still learning. I probably know 20 or 30% of what there is to know. I'm learning stuff every day.
>
> Oh it's scary. I know when I first came out, my first day of work, I was like, "OK, let's go fight crime". And we didn't get a call all day. And I was like, "Aren't we supposed to be doing something"?

Along with these transitions during the first posting, officers and spouses suggested that there was sometimes a "personality shift" that happened within Members once they began their career. Some participants suggested that this might occur as a function of coping with certain aspects of the job; nevertheless, participants described this shift as a significant transition.

> So for these cadets who come here married, there must be a huge transition period for the wives because they're trying to get to know someone new. Especially—training is one thing, but once they get to a detachment and experience calls and some stressful situations or some situations that are pretty dark, then a lot of times, you stop and reflect on those things. And, the thing is, if they don't communicate how they feel to the other party, then it must be very, very difficult for them.
>
> I think you really change as a person when you get in the Force. After having, I don't know what period of time it is, maybe a year or so, you really do change. You just have to I guess to suit the work. I feel like you get a lot more tougher.
>
> I know when [husband's name] and I did get married, he said quite a few times that he didn't think he could have gone to Depot and been married, because you're pulled in so many—you couldn't just focus on what you had to do—it would be difficult to do that. I think Depot changes people. Like you have a relationship, and then this person goes away, and then they're a totally different person—that would be quite a bit to deal with.

In terms of specific postings, *Rural* and *Isolated Posts* emerged as those that presented significant challenges. In the rural settings, all participants discussed frustration with the "fishbowl" or "glass house" phenomenon. Many noted that by virtue

of being a police family, citizens in the communities in which they lived knew not only where they resided, but often when they were home or the activities that they were involved in.

> The first place [posting], you know, it was the glass house on the hill, because it was a small community and people even saw, from the hospital [the hospital was located at the bottom of the hill and their house could be seen from the hospital], you know, "They put their lights out at three o'clock in the morning, I wonder what was going on last night."
>
> The city policing was a lot different and I think there's certain dynamics of city policing compared to a smaller town and then to a **really** small town. I can see some graduated levels of having to relax and let go. It was funny to bring the police car home, and your neighbours know what you're doing.
>
> It's like living in a fishbowl. And I can guarantee you, where I live right now, everybody knows this is the cop house. But you get used to that.
>
> Sure, the smaller the community, the clearer the fishbowl is—the smaller the fishbowl. Everybody sees through.

In relation to the concept of the "glass house", many participants described being acutely vigilant of their own behaviour in public. Some noted that many of their routine actions were often scrutinised.

> Yeah. Well, we definitely noticed a big difference coming from a large centre, where you're very anonymous. We lived in a condo in the city, we didn't know our neighbours, we lived there for three years and we didn't know anybody in the building. And then you go to [2nd posting] and you're bringing the police car home, it's in the driveway.
>
> That [being closely scrutinised] is certainly very true of the policemen in a small town—he makes sure that he does go 40 in a school zone, and so does his wife [laughs].
>
> It must have been a year and a half ago, we got invited to the neighbours'. They had a barn dance. I was working, so I couldn't go, but she went with some other friends. And they told me, "Yeah, stop out, say hi to everybody before the night's out". So I went and stopped in there when I was working. Lots of people didn't know who I was and they're like, "oh, the cops are here. We're in trouble". So I go in and talk to everybody.

> And [wife's name] was done, it was probably two or three o'clock in the morning, and she says, "Do you want to give me a ride home"? And there was nothing going on that night, so I said, "Yeah, I'll give you a ride home". So, of course the next day it's, "The cop showed up and picked up his drunk wife" [laughing].

For participants who experienced a *Northern Post*, some described a number of requirements that were sometimes "unexpected". In particular, one spouse explained that the demands of the job were greater in the northern detachment that they were posted in, which subsequently created considerable strain on their marriage.

> Well, it will either kill your marriage or it will make it stronger. The first couple years up there—it was really, really hard on our marriage. It was a very busy place to work for both our jobs. You see lots of stuff up there that you don't see down here. It's a different environment, it's a different culture. So you have a lot of different things happening that creates stress in your life.

Participants who had been posted to northern detachments also noted that, in some communities, not having regular access to amenities presented many challenges.

> So we went there with a four-month-old baby, no hospital, no doctor, there's a nursing station, a two-nurse nursing station and a doctor would fly up every six weeks or so, a dentist would come in every three months. And there's around 350 people there, all but 20, less than 20 who were not Inuit—there was a handful of professional people—teachers, the RCMP and the nursing staff, were white and the rest were Inuit. The sun didn't rise for 60 days in the winter, didn't set for 80 in the summer, so it was just a wild experience—no vehicle. We had an ATV, an RCMP ATV, a snow machine, and a boat that we could use, that we used personally as well. And no police vehicle at all [no car or truck].

Overall, participants also referred to the more general pros and cons of the transfer process. Participants explained that postings generally last about five years; however, some noted that on occasion, especially "nowadays", Members and their families can remain at a posting for up to 10 years. Some participants described the advantages of moving; for instance, they explained that they looked forward to the

Restarting Benefits every few years. As previous researchers have discussed, very little attention has been devoted to the "positive spillover" between work and home (Grzywacz & Marks, 2000); however, some participants certainly considered this requirement of the job as having a positive influence upon their marriage.

> Well, in our case, with the RCMP, it's mostly been the moves and things like that [that have had the most impact on their marriage]. And probably the moves themselves are, in our case, are good. Because we feel that, whenever we are in a posting and we're involved in our different activities and life gets hectic and you're just so busy. And then all of a sudden that exciting prospect of moving is there. It kind of lights your fire and you think "What are the opportunities and things we're going to get to do there?" or "Where's the next place we could go?", or "What kind of things are we going to have to deal with, the challenges? What things are we going to hate?" They're still exciting.
>
> But the biggest thing is that I think, for us, is when we do get to our new posting, it takes us away from all those activities and things that we've integrated ourselves with and then all of a sudden it's back to the two of us. And so, I think that for us, is really therapeutic. Because all of a sudden it's all about us. It's not about the activities and the things that we're doing. Those have all been sort of wiped clean and we just have to entertain each other and go and explore the city and meet new people. It's always fun for that first year or so, because you're meeting new people. So that, for us, I think that's one of the really good things of how it's impacted us.

All participants also described, however, many stressful components inherent within the transfer process, often related to the *Uprooting Challenges*. These identified challenges are particularly interesting, as researchers have devoted very little empirical attention to the consequences that the transfer process may have on police officers and their families. One of the most significant challenges noted was the difficulty participants found in being away from family and friends. Often a Member and their family are posted across the country from where they originated. Many described this as being a particularly stressful component, especially during transitional phases in their

life, including having a child or when having to deal with a particularly stressful event like a medical crisis or serious injury.

> But, you know, the flip side of that is having to move away from our families or be away constantly from our families. It's not a job where we can just choose "OK, the next place we're going to go is here" because they may or may not have that available for us. So, we're always kind of under the gun of what they want for us and what's available. In other jobs or other people's life they can say "OK. We're moving to [place]. That's where our families are and we're going to move there". We don't have that option. We have to go where they tell us. So that's been tough—only since we've had the child. Before, neither one of us really—it was not really a big deal to be away from our families as much. But since we've had [daughter's name], now we're **really**, we're like, "Oh, that's why people live with their families". [laughs]
>
> Part of the problem also is we don't have family out here. I would have liked to go back to [name of province], but the policy at the time we went through was you can't go back to your home province. And that's changed **so** much since then. I would love to go back there, I would love to have family close by, just for things that you deal with. We've had a number of small little emergencies we had to deal with and just having nobody out here has been difficult.

Another *Uprooting Challenge* was having developed community attachments that made it particularly difficult to move.

> Oh yeah. I was totally sad to come back. I loved it out there. I loved the mountains. And the thing is, we were both reasonably happy there, lots of friends, we had our own life away from family—I mean, not that they wouldn't visit and we'd phone—but we had our own life out there and we loved it. But it came right down to the fact that they were just putting a lot of pressure on him to get into the [name of section].
>
> And yeah, I was terribly sad to leave [name of first posting]. I bawled practically all the way to [name of city]—and I drove! We each had a vehicle—I think I took the one with the cats, he took the one with the dog [laughing]. And I bawled practically the whole way, because we had such a good life there.

3.2.1.4 Construct: Danger Potential: There in the Background

Another significant aspect of RCMP work that was identified by participants as having an impact on their marriage was the potential for Members (and sometimes their families) to become involved in dangerous situations. Although many participants agreed that the dangerousness of the job was not necessarily something that was on the forefront of their minds or in their conversations, it was something that was "always there in the background".

> Like, when I go up to someone's door, even now, I don't stand in front of the door and knock, I turn sideways. I'm sure, you talk to [wife's name], we go into a lounge, and we very seldom go into a lounge or a restaurant—I always like to sit at the back with my back to the wall, so I can see who's coming and going. Whether that's me or whether that's through being a policeman, I have no idea.

Spouses, in particular, recalled many times during their marriage, most notably early on, that they would worry a great deal about their partner's safety.

> I think earlier on, in the early years, I think it was a conscious issue in the sense that you did concern yourself with it more [the potential dangerousness of the job]. Certainly, I think, subconsciously it's always an issue. I'm sure it's always there. But the stress level's probably a little higher in an RCMP couple because of the fact that they worry about their spouse at work and what they may go through.

> I know when we first got out [of training], it was a very big adjustment, me being out at work til 4 o'clock in the morning and she being at home. She said she couldn't sleep for the first couple of weeks because I wasn't home. Always wondering what I'm doing.

Participants identified specific calls or situations that, in their experience, were considered particularly dangerous, which they identified as exacerbating their worries.

> There's been times where I've been quite worried, like when it's a gun call or it's drug stuff that they're working on.

> There were a few conflicts, home conflicts. Those are usually the worst.

> I would know that if I heard that it was a domestic dispute, and as a trained police officer, knowing that the two things that kill police officers most are domestic disputes and traffic pull-overs. Pull-overs are always the unknown, you don't know what you're walking up to. Domestic disputes are the unknown, but they're also where people's emotions are extremely high. And when you arrest the offender—say it's a male who was in the house, and he happens to be the one who's done something wrong, and you arrest him, it's not uncommon for the spouse, the lady to become an aggressor towards the police.

3.2.2 Super-Construct: The Affected Components: It is Our Life

Within this super-construct (see Figure 4), participants identified specific aspects of the job that, again, they viewed as setting their RCMP marriage apart from many other marriages. Within this super-construct, however, participants identified particular components of their lives that were significantly changed as a result of their involvement with the RCMP. The constructs that emerged included the *Inevitable Work-Home Connection*, *Earning Half the Badge*, and *Social Life Shift* (see Table 3)

Table 3

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "Affected Components: It is Our Life"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
The Affected Components: It is Our Life	Inevitable Work-Home Connection	Work-Home Spillover
		Communication Exchanges
		Confidentiality Issues
		Effects on Children
	Earning ½ the Badge	Getting Lost in the Shuffle
		RCMP Expectations
		Bulk of Homelife Responsibilities
		Career Implications
	Social Life Shift	Outside Interaction's Change
		Sticking to the Inside

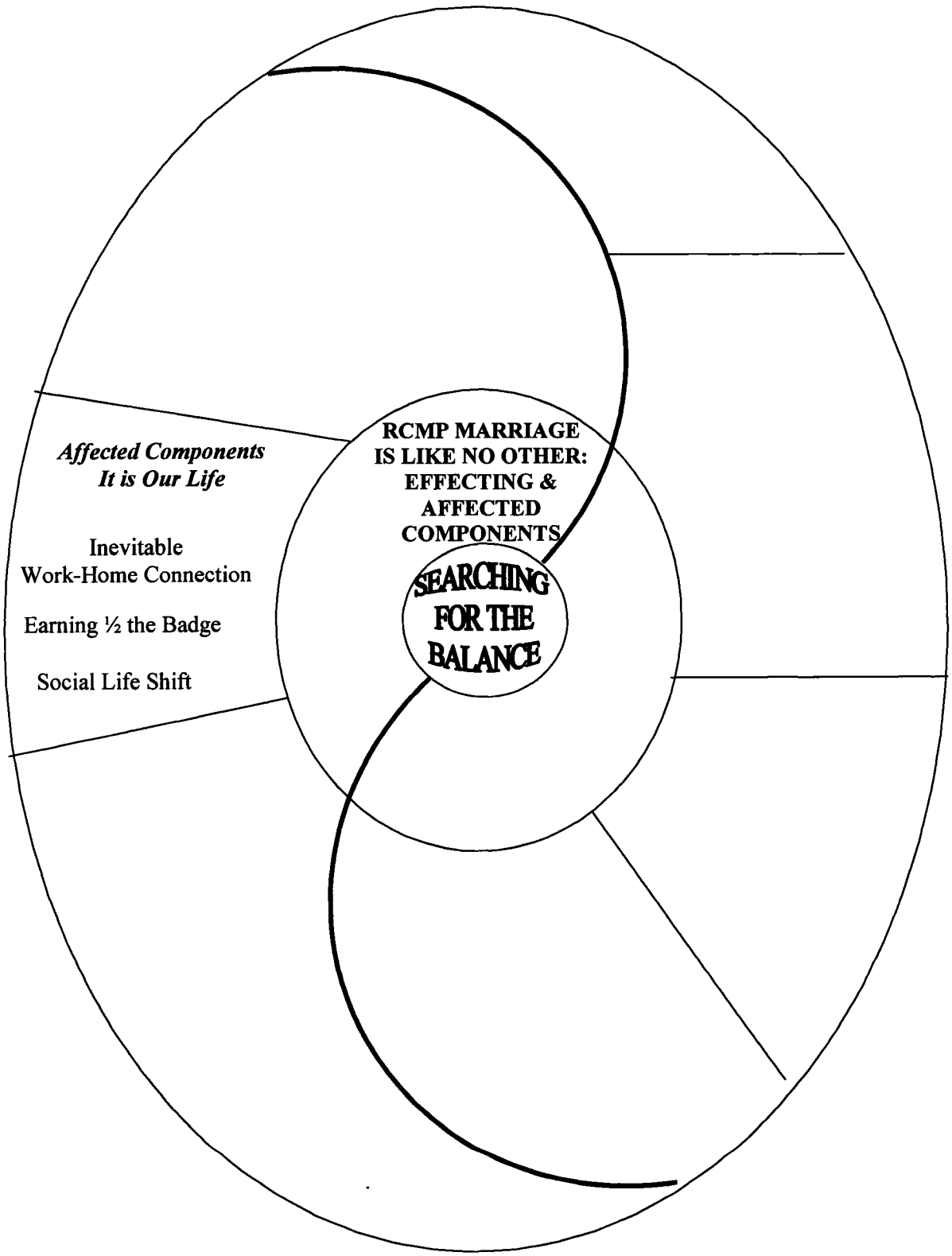

Figure 4. Affected Components: It is Our Life

3.2.2.1 Construct: Inevitable Work-Home Connection

Within the *Inevitable Work-Home Connection* construct, participants outlined the many ways in which work undeniably infiltrated their home life. Within the *Work-Home Spillover* sub-construct, participants identified a diversity of ways in which their marriage had been uniquely affected, by virtue of what the officer-spouse dealt with in their jobs and subsequently brought home to the marriage.

> And I think it [police work] impacts the relationship because what happens is you do things that most normal people would not do. You get put into situations that most people never get into, and so, it really doesn't matter—it could be a death. You go to the death, you do what you have to do, you muster up the courage to do it, and then you go home and you're supposed to be a loving, caring partner. It doesn't always work that way. One second I'm dealing with a dead body, the next second I'm supposed to be loving and affectionate and caring. So I think that has had a **huge** effect on the relationship.

> I think they're different [police careers from other careers]—not of all jobs. But I think people, and maybe this is how sick I am, but I think people have this—I think policemen have an aura of mystique about them. I think they go into places, they do things that everybody knows most people don't get to do. They see things that most people don't see. So as a result, people are kind of attracted towards you because you do that type of thing. And policemen are good storytellers. They tell different stories about all the funny things and the shit that happens to them. Naturally, people are somewhat gravitated towards you. Now, if there's a bit of a shank in your relationship, other women, women because in my case I'm a man, other women could be attracted to you as well. Number one, you have an exciting job, you make fairly good money, you are a good talker, you're fun to be around. And if I'm getting my needs met by that, which is very easy to do because it certainly is good for my ego—how does my wife compare to the people like that? It makes it very difficult. But, we also see people in all kinds of vulnerable positions and at vulnerable times in their lives. And quite often the police are the saviour. He's the white knight on the horse. So, people can be very attracted to you for that. Yeah. Now, it's very, it's very unhealthy, it's very dysfunctional to think that you're getting your jollies from people that are suffering. But also you're probably suffering too. You got needs, and your needs can get met in all kinds of ways. So, I think that is different than [other jobs]—maybe it's not—maybe it's just because I think it's different, but I think there are some differences.

Furthermore, in another reflection of the *Work-Home Spillover,* some participants mentioned being under the impression that those in police marriages faced a higher rate of divorce than "normal" marriages, similar to the reported opinions of police officers in previous studies (e.g., Gentz & Taylor, 1994; Kirschman, 1997). There were, however, a number of participants who were unsure of specific statistics, but guessed that the divorce rate was at least as high as those in the "general population".

> Well, I don't know if it's been higher [the divorce rate among police officers and their spouses], but it's been as high as the general public's, I guess. We have seen a lot of divorce around us, but isn't it 50% of most marriages that start today, don't get, they end anyway? So I don't know as we've noticed it being higher than the general public, but it sure is high these days.

> I don't really know if there's been a higher rate of divorce in police couples. It's hard to say, because a lot of our friends are police couples. But I guess with that, I do know **several** who have broken up—even since we've been married.

> I did when I was there [saw a lot of marriage fail while posted in a Northern detachment]. I definitely did. We saw lots and lots of people that were married for the second time, the odd ones were third times.

In terms of a more literal interpretation of the *Work-Home Spillover*, participants described an inability to "shut it off" (i.e., work) once they came home. In fact, many participants discussed the fact that despite efforts to keep work and home separate, they found that, at times, this was an impossibility.

> And it goes back to what we were talking about earlier. Work spills over into home, and absolutely, home life spills into work. You can't have it—there is no wall. And that's where I absolutely believe that it's bullshit when somebody says, "I can separate the two". No way. We're human beings. We can't put everything into chambers and say, "that's just my work and I don't have it come home. And that's my home life and it doesn't come to work with me." There might be the exception to the rule and maybe I'd be surprised, but right now I firmly believe that there's no special people out there who are able to separate the two.

> Oh yeah. I wish that there was a way I could just flip a switch and leave work at work, but I don't think I'll ever be able to do that. It's just a part of me.

Within the *Work-Home Spillover* sub-construct, participants also outlined how "home" was not necessarily a private place. This aspect of the work-home connection was described as particularly relevant in smaller communities.

> In small towns when you're working front line, the job is not conducive to separating work from home, because people call you at home. You know, they're like a store-front service. He would try to set boundaries with people who were like, "somebody ripped my flowers out of the flower bed". You know, calling at two in the morning—we had one of those once [laughing]. I won't tell you what he said, but anyway. But if it was something serious, if it was life-threatening, of course he will and he had to respond.
>
> I've got people coming to the door, on or off duty saying, "Hey, I just had something happen".
>
> A spouse goes through a lot too, just being married to be an RCMP officer. Because plenty spouses, sitting at home, all of a sudden have someone pounding at the door saying, "Where's your husband? I need to talk to him right now". "What do you need to talk to him about?" "That's none of your business, but you better get your husband on the phone right now". That happens. You get people coming to your door, and spouses, if they're not prepared for it, that's a real eye-opener. That's a real stressor for them. Because all of a sudden they're at home alone with the kids and where's the husband? He's out doing the job and somebody's pounding at the door saying, "I demand to speak to your husband because I'm pissed off at him."

Communication Exchanges at home was another area that participants identified as being influenced by the profession. Participants described certain aspects of their everyday discussions that were shaped by the police partner's job. For example, participants noted that "the stories" became a common aspect of their lives. Members recalled that they were often known for their stories of on-the-job experiences, while spouses recollected often hearing the stories repeatedly.

> Sometimes I find it difficult when my sister and brother-in-law come down, they're both RCMP, and we'll all be sitting at the table and they'll all be talking codes and abbreviations, and "Oh this happened" and "That happened". It's fun for them and I'm just like, glazing over. Really quiet. Not really involved in the conversation. But that's a really good outlet for [husband's name] too, because he has people to bounce things off of and talk to about. So, there's times I have a few girlfriends over and he's out of the room.
>
> You go home and, we'll be driving down the highway, and I'll be like, "I wonder what stories I'm going to tell this time".
>
> And I know when we go home to see my family or something like that. If I was a plumber, it wouldn't be, "Well, you got any good plumbing stories to tell me lately" [laughs].

Another aspect of *Communication Exchanges* that emerged was the potential for officers to implement an interrogation style of communication with their spouse. Klein (1994) and Lowenstein (1999) have noted that police officers are often trained to communicate by "getting information" rather than "sharing information". Many participants, both Members and spouses, agreed with this notion; however, when asked whether this type of communication occurred at home, spouses noted that they had experienced this,

> [laughing] Oh, I've had the interrogations. I caught on to that early on too. "Are you interrogating me"? Oh yeah, I've had those interrogations definitely. Definitely. We've definitely had those conflicts. Definitely had those conflicts. Of course we're both very, very stubborn people.
>
> Yeah. That's been a struggle. Yeah. [laughs]
>
> I'm just trying to think. Yes and no, but sometimes I actually think I'm aware of it more, that he might try sort of interrogating me, so I kind of bust him on it. [laughs] So, I don't think so really. Not in our case anyway.

while Members did not suspect that this type of communication occurred within their marriage whatsoever.

I don't think so.

Right. Oh. No. I don't really bring any of that stuff home…

Oh no, not at all, not at all. I think that we share very well.

Confidentiality Issues was the next sub-construct identified within the *Inevitable Work-Home Connection.* Participants varied in their opinions regarding the degree to which officers should share the confidential nature of their work at home with their spouse. Spouses noted the importance of having their partner discuss the difficult facets of their job, which often are related to those aspects that are deemed "confidential"; however, participants also described the difficult position spouses were then placed in, after becoming privy to confidential information.

> It's hard from a civilian standpoint, because I think they need to know, obviously, that their spouse has gone through a serious incident. They've got to have some kind of understanding. I guess you're always worried about the confidentiality side. They don't understand how important it is to keep these things quiet—some do. Some don't. So I don't know how you would draw the line. I mean, a spouse has got to know generally what is going on with their partner, otherwise things are going to break down. The spouse that's going through the difficulties is going to have to turn to somebody else or they're going to have difficulties themselves.

> He has such high integrity, he really took to heart the not talking about what he did at work. Which, I really see the importance of, yet when it's that much a part of your life, when you get wrapped up in your work, it doesn't benefit your relationship.

> After that incident—that one with the impaired when he was right in my face [about her husband's family], that was hard. I know you're not supposed to discuss stuff with your spouse in terms of confidentiality, but you know when you go home and basically bawl because you're so upset. I'm getting changed and he wants to know why [she was upset]. So, I think you tend to pull away from him a little bit, because normally I'd go and bawl on his shoulder but all I can say is, "I've had a bad night. I picked up an impaired driver and he was in my face…" And he [husband] was really upset. And now there's a little bit of strain—not on the relationship but we tell each other everything. There are no secrets. And now there are things I can't tell him because I know he'd want to beat the

> crap out of who ever it was for doing that. So then you take a step back. ... But sometimes I wonder if he wonders about my trust, because I don't say things. There are things I'll talk about, like "we picked up this impaired", but I don't give the name out of that person. And sometimes I wonder even when I get home from work, like I'll stay at work late: "Well, where were you?" "Well why?" "How come you're so late?" You know, and I don't know if that's his own insecurity or if that's part of my job.

Further to this, one spouse who had been married to her partner for 15 years pointed out that, although she found it extremely important to keep the lines of communication open with her spouse, she had nowhere to turn when learning of traumatic or difficult information. Similar to this, other researchers have discussed the potential for "vicarious trauma" to be experienced by spouses of police officers (Nelson & Wright, 1999).

> Yeah. There have been times where that's been **really** hard to deal with. The stuff that he brings home, because I can't, I can't tell anybody.

The final aspect of the *Inevitable Work-Home Connection* identified by participants was the *Effects on Children.* All participants in the study had children or were expecting their first child at the time of the interviews. Although many of them referred to their children throughout the course of our discussions, the female participants were primarily the ones who raised concerns about the effect that the job may have had or will have on their children. For instance, spouses described the effects of transfer-related life disruptions, such as losing friendships and having to start in new schools, as being their "major concerns".

> The other thing is making sure your kids are taken care of. And I don't know how many times I've heard, "oh, kids are resilient. You can move them all over the place and they manage just fine". Well, we don't believe that.

> Well, I always tell people I think our kids are pretty fortunate because both of them only ever went to two schools [name of schools]. You know, and there are not many Members who have been that fortunate.
>
> It's just being moved when the kids are small and they're in school and you don't want to have to move them, if they're getting along fine in the school they're in. Or, if they're older teens, and they don't want to move, which you can hardly blame them for. So it's difficult then too.

In contrast to this, the fact that the children of police officers also benefited from new experiences and opportunities was also highlighted. One spouse suggested that her children were more open minded and adaptable as a result of their moving experiences.

> In terms of exposure, in terms of getting involved with different things [were benefits for her children]. For instance, our oldest son, since we've come to our last place, he's opened up, very much involved, his school work has just blossomed. Well, because of the age factor too, I mean again he's 17, but their exposure, positive exposure to the environment that we are in now. It's a learning environment.
>
> As far as the boys being transient, like that, they realise now, at their age now, well one, actually the oldest is gone to military college and perhaps that military-type attitude was instilled into him. But, thinking back now, they think that it perhaps made them a little more flexible, more open-minded in their thinking, it enabled them to adapt more into their environments that they go into.
>
> Actually, my oldest boy, I had a conversation with him last trip he was home about 6 months ago, and that was one of our conversations, and he believed that it had made him more open-minded.

Participants (again, primarily the women) also outlined more specific influences that the RCMP had on the lives of their children. Similar to the conduct vigilance that was magnified for police officers and their spouses, participants also suggested that their children were expected to be aware of their actions in certain situations.

> And you hope that when the kids are driving that they are doing that too [going the speed limit]. They get reminded that people look at you, they don't see another teenager that is driving, they see the Sergeant's son that is driving, and how come he can go 58 miles an hour through the 40 mile zone.

> It does get offered [drinks or drugs at parties]. I guess our kids got through that OK, but I'm sure there were times when they wished their dad wasn't a Mountie.

Furthermore, the difficulties of being the "cop's kid" were also identified as potential hurdles for the children of police officers, in that they might be put in awkward positions or singled out.

> Even the children, growing children, whether it be teenagers, maybe they're having problems dealing with the community, or dealing with going from a larger centre to a smaller centre. All of a sudden they are the focus. I mean, I've heard stories of that also, where the children had a hard time developing in the community because they're the Member's kids—"get 'em" type of thing. It never happened to mine, like I say, we've had, never had any problems that way.
>
> So yeah, that's when we made the decision, we've done our small town stints and we want to go to the city now. Because it was affecting our children as well.

3.2.2.2 Construct: Earning Half the Badge

As others have also pointed out (e.g., Kirschman, 1997; Stone, 1999), police spouses endure a number of stressors simply by virtue of their partner's choice of profession. In this construct, *Earning Half the Badge*, participants outlined the significant role that the spouses of police officers play, primarily with respect to the sacrifices that they may have to make for their partner's career.

> I said, "I can tell you until I'm blue in the face what it's like, but that's my perspective". So I let [wife's name] basically, talk to them [spouses and family members of a graduating troop of cadets at Depot]. And I think that that was a lot better than any Member could have done because they're [the spouses] on the other half. And she said some things that were very interesting. And she'll be able to elaborate on them. Most of the things that she said were so true, in that half of the badge belongs to the spouse.
>
> I was talking a lot about just different things [to spouses and family members of a graduating troop of cadets at Depot], in terms of the

> perspective, and I said, "You know, I'm not going to sugar coat it for you. It's not going to be great at times, for the families too, because there's all kinds of other sides to it". We've lived in three different provinces, I've had to leave different jobs, good paying jobs, I've had to—you leave your friends and family behind.
>
> They came up to her and said "thank you very much. You're right, you know, I **do** deserve half that badge". And I wasn't bashing, and neither was she, bashing the RCMP in anyway.

One of the primary issues that participants outlined as sequelae from the job that spouses have to deal with was the issue of *Getting Lost in the Shuffle*. Many spouses related the difficulties surrounding having to start their lives "over and over again", particularly because of the transfers. Similar to the findings reported by previous researchers (Aharon, 1984; Stone, 1999), participants explained that Members always had the security of their job to go to with each posting, along with the familiarity of the detachment setting in each new community. The spouses, however, often had to start from "scratch" and develop new roles for themselves.

> All of a sudden this person is in a new town, they're going to have to look for a new job, new friends. And then, when you move again, that RCMP Member always has that stability of the RCMP. There's always that structure for them, there's always that family, the RCMP family, you're going to know somebody from somewhere, or someone's going to know—so there's always that connection. But then that link is always lost for the family member.
>
> For me, I can go anywhere and have something to talk about with somebody at a new posting. Whereas for her, it's starting right from scratch pretty much. So I'd say, it's easier for me to transition than [for] her.
>
> They [spouses] have to realise though that they're going to get settled, and everything's good, and the next thing you know, the husbands going to come home and say "We're leaving. I just got transferred to so and so. Or I just got a promotion to here".

Additionally, one Member with 24 years service described how difficult it was for spouses of police officers to "compete" with police work.

> Because, I think policing is the most wonderful affair you could ever hope to have—it's always exciting, it's always fresh, it *never* has a chance to get stale. Because behind the next car or around the next corner, there's always something really interesting to do. And it's very hard for a relationship to compete with that. How does your partner always be exciting, always be fresh, always being new? I think it's hard for a partner to compete with a police force.

Another sub-construct that emerged within *Earning Half the Badge* related to *RCMP Expectations* that were sometimes required of spouses. Participants described a number of situations in which they found themselves having to "face the front line". Many described this situation as happening more frequently in rural or isolated detachments, but spouses nevertheless described the experiences as alarming. For example, one spouse who was posted at a northern detachment recalled her experience:

> There was one situation where in [third posting], for some weird reason, there was banging on the door in the night and I **never** got up, I let [husband's name], because if there's banging in the night, it's not going to be for me [laughs]. But for some reason I jumped out of bed and I went running to the door and this girl ... I opened the door, and this girl fell through the door, into my arms, naked, except for a pair of thin, really thin stretchy, pull on pants. I looked at the thermometer after, and it was below minus 40, I don't know what the temperature actually was. She had just run from the house next door, she had no top, no bra, no socks, and she had been **so** badly beaten. Her and her boyfriend were drinking, and he just beat the tar out of her. So I'm holding this girl on our living room floor and, on one hand—she was being really loud, so I was frightened for our baby that he was going to wake up and then I would have to care for him, versus taking care of her. I yelled to [husband's name] to get her a sweater, and he brought me a pull-over fleece, but we couldn't get it on, she couldn't move her arms, so we just wrapped a house coat around her. Our only option was to drive her to the nursing station on the snow machine, but that's not a good option. So, he's outside starting the snow machine, and the by-law truck was passing, so he flagged him down and got him to come. But, when he was outside doing that, I thought she was dying. She was choking and gagging and making all these noises and I didn't know what to do for her. And I was **so terrified**. So anyway, they got her to the nursing station and she was OK and she stayed away from

> him for a week or so and then went back. But that's the first time that I was **really** faced with dealing with all those emotions that they have to deal with all the time.

Members and spouses also reflected on the necessity for a spousal code of conduct. Participants again identified this as particularly necessary in the smaller detachments.

> And I think that's it for him too. He might go out to men's night or something, but he's very conscious of what he's doing because he doesn't want it to come back and bite me in the butt.

> [Police spouses have to be aware of their actions] especially in the small town. In the city it wouldn't matter at all, you wouldn't think about it. But in a small town you certainly would. And so would the Mountie's wife, you wouldn't want to be walking across the street with your beer either.

Some of the spousal participants in the current study (all of whom were female) described having to take on the *Bulk of Homelife Responsibilities*, especially during the early years of shiftwork and what is referred to as "voluntary overtime". During transfers as well, spouses identified it as often their responsibility to keep the home life "stable", including taking on the primary role of raising the children. With respect to relational maintenance strategies, researchers have previously highlighted the importance of sharing tasks as fundamental relational maintenance behaviour (e.g., Dainton & Stafford, 1992; Ragsdale, 1996). It appears, however, that at times in a police marriage, much of this responsibility falls upon the spouse.

> And I think as a partner, in my case because it's my wife, the fact that she always kept those rituals going, the family stuff, she tried to make our lives as normal to everybody else in the community. And it wasn't. Because when I was going to work, other people were going out walking and playing with their kids. I'm jumping in the car, I'm going to work. So [wife's name] really compensated. She'd do things with the kids alone, where everybody else had a partner to do it with, because I worked

> shiftwork. And then, it's funny because when I came home, it was always a big deal. [Wife's name] made it a big deal, the kids made it a big deal.
>
> No, to tell you the truth he was not at home a whole lot, so I handled things by myself. He might disagree, but it's true. Like, I raised the kids, the kids were always my responsibility. Because, he came from a situation where mommy would stay at home, looked after the kids, and daddy went off to work. Well, we moved from [name of province] and at that time I was pregnant with my second one. I already had one—fifteen months at that time. We moved to [name of first posting]. So I was pretty isolated.
>
> We could look at more or less at the home life, sharing the responsibilities, where he just comes off a shift and then gets called out at maybe 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to go to a dispute and getting home at 5 or 6. I remember those days. And then sleeping all day and going to work again that night. Those are the negative sides.

Perhaps one of the more commonly-discussed aspects of their lives that spouses identified as having been affected by their police spouse's career was that of their own *Career Implications*. Most participants highlighted the fact that spouses of police officers often had to sacrifice their career when it was time for the Member to be transferred. One of the ramifications of this, as participants pointed out, was that spouses of police officers rarely have a pension, as often they do not stay in one job long enough.

> It's all very nice, when all of a sudden your career is going along and you get into something you're really happy doing and then one day he comes home and says, "Oh guess what, we're moving to [location]". And then it's always the wife that has to find the job again, you know.
>
> My career goes wherever it goes, for the betterment of the Force and the community. Every time she goes, she has to start at the bottom again and work her way up. She's now looking at retirement and she has no pension because she's gone from pillar to post, always starting over again.

Furthermore, some spouses noted that at times they experienced either being limited by their career options in a particular posting, or other times they noted that they had to make career changes in order to find work.

> No [she was unable to work in her profession while at some postings]. Because I just had what they called [name of certificate], which is two years. Up there [northern posting], you needed three years of university to teach up there. So I just worked at other things, at the bank, a car dealership. And then when we moved back here and [son's name] was in grade one, I went back to university and finished my degree. I **never** wanted to work full time. I wanted a good part-time job. But I didn't want to work full-time. So, I went to the bridging programme for women. And, everybody was going, they were going back to school, and I thought "as if". But I really didn't want to work at Zellers or WalMart. I know that sounds sort of snooty, but I know I'd be bored. So I thought there's got to be something else.

3.2.2.3 Construct: Social Life Shift

The next construct that participants identified as an aspect of their lives that was affected by the job was that of a *Social Life Shift*. For instance, most participants noted that *Outside Interactions Change* once they became a part of the RCMP. The primary motivation for this change was the fact that Members and their spouses realised that there were restrictions on their social life, as a result of being associated with the RCMP.

> Yeah—you have to be cognisant of it [your behaviour in social settings], if it's the friends that you choose.
>
> I mean, you're not going to go and hang out with certain people if you know, fairly clearly, that occasionally they smoke up or whatever. You can't be out with those people. Even when you go to a social setting and there's people who are generally OK, but once in a while they get really ripped and they drive while they're drunk—well that, you know what I mean? Things like that, it affects you all the time.
>
> It makes me wonder how he thinks in a situation like that too. He's so easy going, and he's really friendly, and easy to get to know. But I sometimes wonder how he's going to react if somebody says something [referring to an illegal activity or making a negative comment about the RCMP]—not that I've worried about it, but it's just sort of humourous. I guess, when we're in a new situation, sometimes there's people that treat him a little bit differently once they find that out. But, we don't find really that it's something that comes up very often.

Perhaps as a result of having to be selective with respect to their social group, participants identified a number of issues associated with their tendency, at times, to *Stick to the Inside*. There was the indication that other RCMP families created a ready-made social group. There was also an identified comfort in being able to "talk shop" openly, in that the trust factor was present within their group of peers.

> Yes, gives you a place to start [interacting with other Members and their families posted at the detachment].

> But with younger people [who are not police officers], I find it's a little bit more difficult to get integrated with them because you don't know what their background is. So sometimes they're not fans of the police or they've had bad experiences with the police. So that's why you have always that comfort of going back to your RCMP friends, because you know who they are.

Participants also identified, however, that at times these insider relationships could become "too easy", to the point that their social networks were consumed with activities and friendships that were connected to the RCMP.

> But I just think that if you get into that trap that you're a policeman and that's your life and that's your family's life, and everything you associate with is revolved around that and you set yourself apart from the rest of the world because you are a police person—wife, family, whatever—that that's your whole scope. I just think that that's really depressing.

3.2.3 Super-Construct: The Force's Role: Has Come a Long Way ... To Go

Another super-construct (see Figure 5) identified by participants as having an impact on their relationship was *The Force's Role*. Participants acknowledged that they often functioned independently of the Force; however, some also noted that "when they thought about it", they discovered that the Force had played a significant role in their marriage. Participants described an *Employer/Employee Evolution* that has occurred within the Force, including changes in the role of the non-Member spouse.

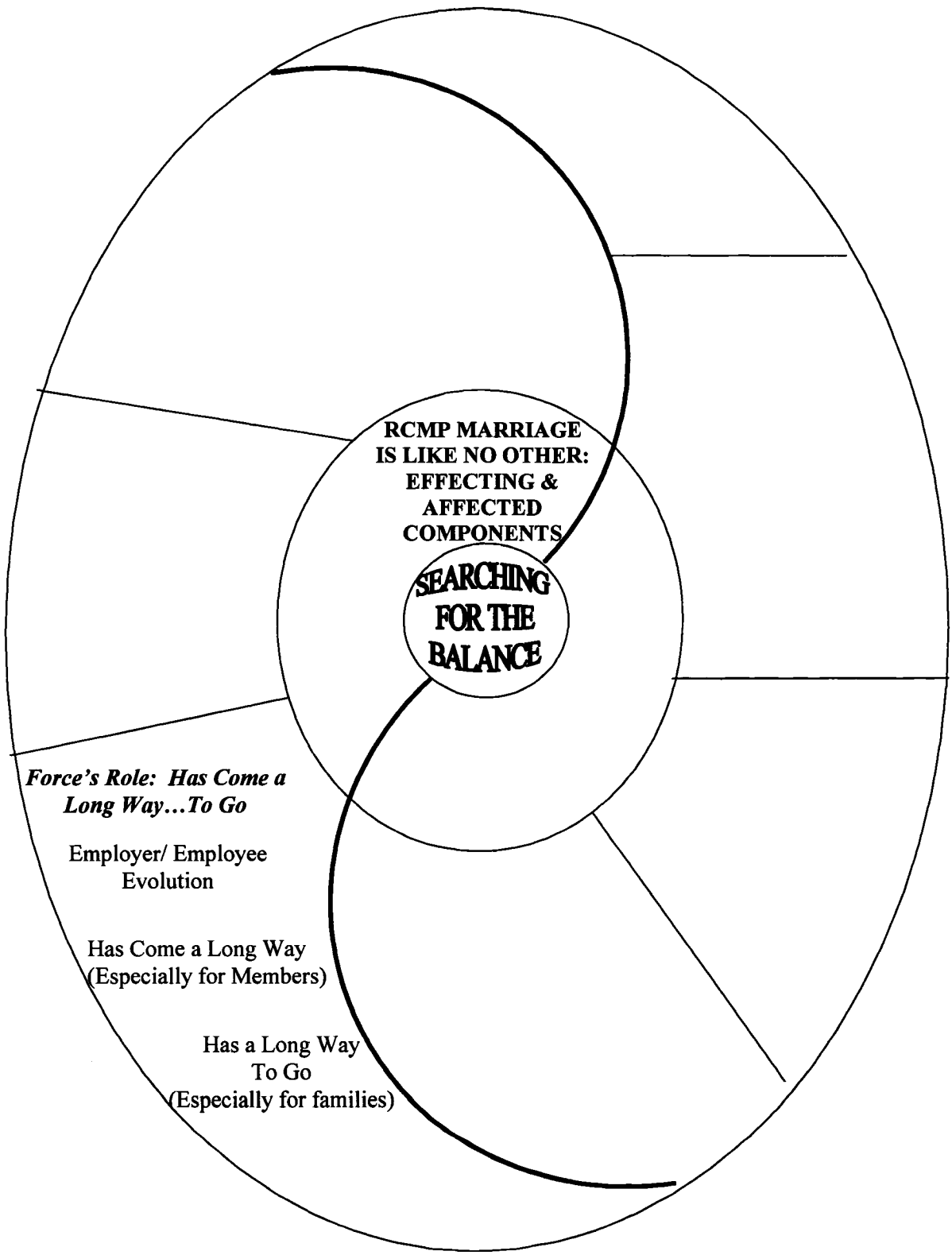

Figure 5. The Force's Role: Has Come a Long Way...To Go

Ways in which participants identified that the Force has been supportive or helpful emerged within the construct, *Has Come a Long Way*, most notably for the Members. However, within the next construct, participants also noted that the Force still *Has a Long Way to Go*, especially when considering support for the spouses and families of Members (see Table 4).

Table 4

Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "The Force's Role: Has Come a Long Way ... To Go"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
The Force's Role: Has a Come a Long Way ... To Go	Employer/Employee Evolution	The Evolving Spouse
		The Evolving Member
		The Evolving Employer
	Has Come a Long Way (Especially for the Members)	Organisation Doing What they Can
		Psychological Supports
		At Transfer Time
		Cohesive Member Community
	Has a Long Way to Go (Especially for the Families)	Family Support Lacking at All Levels
		Unbalanced Leadership

3.2.3.1 Construct: Employer/Employee Evolution

Participants suggested that the role of the Force as an employer has evolved significantly over recent years. Other participants noted that, at the same time, the roles of the Member as well as of the spouse also changed. Specific to the *Evolving Spouse*, the primary change identified was that spouses in the current context have become more career-oriented. Some participants with more years of service noted that the non-police spouse's career was not a primary consideration early in their marriage, as many spouses historically viewed their role as supporting or following their Member spouse's career.

> Another thing too is that women have changed. And I'm talking about wives of Members—you know, you'd get a different perspective if the woman was a Member and so on. But, I didn't have a career. I followed

> him. Where he went, I went. If I were a doctor—you can't try to establish a practice and be married to an RCMP officer that's got to go to someplace in the north. You don't get those northern postings anyway unless you're approved, but you can get someplace just about as ugly. So, it's a time thing. Most women do have careers now that are important to them, that they want to carry on and do something with.
>
> But for a lot of people these days, or for women that are more career-orientated these days, that can be—I'm just saying this now from other marriages we've seen around us—that is something that sometimes there is a large cost that goes with that [the spouse having to give up their career for the sake of the Member's career].

As participants pointed out, this evolution of a more career-oriented spouse may have implications for the versatility of some Member's transferability. As stated earlier, RCMP Members contractually agree that they will be transferred anywhere in the country. This agreement could conceivably cause difficulties within the marriage, particularly when non-Member spouses are more reluctant to give up their career for the sake of their Member spouse's.

In terms of the *Evolving Member*, some participants suggested that the younger generation of cadets may come in more "balanced" than the older generations. Some participants described a transition in this social make-up of the cadets, in that many of them were older and had families before entering the Force. Some participants identified witnessing a transformation in Members, identifying the older generation as much more career-focused.

> Not as much now I don't think [Members making the RCMP their top priority], as they used to because people are much more accommodating. I think the men themselves are much more family-oriented then they were when [husband's name] first started. I think they're much more committed to the family, whereas before they were much more committed to the Force and the family came second. I think, for the most part now, the men know family comes first. That doesn't mean they leave their job when they can't, but they make their family first more than they used to.

> I think 30 years ago there was a lot of people thought the RCMP **is** my life.
>
> But the times have changed though, a lot Jody. The recruits or the cadets that are coming through are all advanced in their age. Some of them have families. Some of them, it's a career change. Like, I know a guy who was a butcher for 14 years and now he's getting into the RCMP and he's got a wife and kids.

As a result of this difference in the age and family structure of some cadets, it was suggested that perhaps junior Members come in with a much clearer sense of the importance of family than previous generations have. Although this may be seen as a positive move, there was also some concern that this lack of focus on Members' careers within the RCMP may, at times, have a negative impact on the Force.

> I guess you've just got to go into the Outfit knowing, you've got to be informed, that the job is just so diverse that you have to be flexible. You have to be flexible and cognisant of the challenges that it brings. Some Members come out with the idea that, "I can punch the clock. I want to punch the clock. I want to do a 9-5 shift and then I'm going home." Well, in my opinion, you can't do that. You wear the badge 24 hours, whether you like it or not.

In a qualitative analysis of perspectives on effective policing by RCMP Members, Lewis (1999), presented similar concerns by older Members, in that some viewed younger Members as sometimes unmotivated and lacking "dedication to the Force". Stark (1998) also reported similar findings during interviews with Canadian K9 officers. Thus, although there has been some change in the organisation in terms of their approach to family life, there may still be difficulty in fully embracing the importance of keeping family life in perspective, given a clash between old and new ideals.

Also emerging in the current study was the fact that the RCMP is actively seeking older applicants. Participants suggested that, in fact, older applicants bring more stability to the Force, which may be one of the primary reasons for the change in the recruitment

focus. It was thus suggested that seeking out older and more established applicants has been a positive move forward by the Force.

> I guess the only thing I would think, for the most part, and things have changed from my era, when I joined, the average age in our troop was probably 20–21 years old, whereas now I think the average age is somewhere between 26 and 30. But also, once in 1973 or 74, we started taking married Members and female Members et cetera. And at that time, once you started taking married Members, the age automatically jumped. You were no longer getting 21, 22, 23 year-olds. They were getting Members—I thought it was one of the best moves they made—because you were getting people that maybe things haven't worked out in their particular line of work, they're probably more settled down once they have a wife and a child or two to support. And yeah, I think of some of the people that I've worked with over the years that joined after they were married, yeah, they were—you get a better day's work out of them. You know, young and single, work wasn't always foremost in your mind.

3.2.3.2 Construct: Has Come a Long Way (Especially for the Members)

In line with the idea of "evolution", many participants pointed out the ways in which the Force has changed with respect to its efforts to support the Members. In this regard, there was the notion that, in many ways, the RCMP *Has Come A Long Way.*

> I think it's changed a lot. I think it has since those days. How could they make it better? Well it is better.
>
> So yeah, I think they're learning. I think they've moved a long way in the last, well, since I retired even.

More specifically, there was the sense from some participants that the *Organisation is Doing what they Can*, especially in light of the fact that the RCMP employs such a large number of personnel. There was some suggestion that it may not necessarily be the Force's role to look after the family, despite the fact that many participants pointed out that spouses often *Earn Half the Badge.*

> I'm not really sure. I guess this is an area that, in some ways, I'm probably a little bit old fashioned. The Force basically employs me, they don't employ my wife.

> I don't think so. I think it's just like any other job lots of times. If you were working as a lawyer, how much do all the lawyers help to support the wife, or if she was a lawyer or whatever. I don't know. It just depends.

Some participants clarified that the Force is supportive of families, but that they tend to act only when there was a "demonstrated issue", rather than taking a proactive role.

> Until there's a demonstrated issue, then it flips. And I really do believe that. I believe the Force is good that way. Once there's something demonstrated, I believe the Force will stand up to the plate and say, "Yes, OK, not a problem. We'll get it taken care of for you and your family." I really do believe that. But, until something happens [laughs], it's: "We'll take everything you can give us".

> They [the RCMP] have no infrastructure [for preventative or ongoing support], until something goes wrong, and then they try to do counselling and things like that.

Others were quick to point out that the Member has a responsibility as well to look after themselves and their families, using the resources that are in place.

> Well, you see, I think that's why it's still murky in that situation [directing the entire Membership to be more family-oriented] is because it's hard to convey to your whole general membership. Because there are still people who think that the job has first priority over the family. So how, if they can balance that out for themselves, then it's hard for the Force to come along and say "listen, you **will** spend this many hours with your family".

> Well, I think it's the old story—you can lead a horse to water but you can't make him drink. But, if you're exposed to it often enough, you can't help but pick up some of these ideas. Now, whether you choose to put them into practice or not, I guess....

The resources that Member's, in particular, identified as being in place include *Psychological Supports*, namely the Member/Employee Assistance Program (M/EAP). As outlined in the RCMP Health Services policy manual (2004), M/EAP is designed to "help members/employees obtain, on a confidential basis, assistance to resolve personal, social, or health problems that might adversely affect their work performance" (p.DI).

Referral Agents act as the resource person. These Referral Agents are any Member or employee who is trained to function as the confidential link to available resources.

> They now have a full time M/EAP, Members' Assistant, MAP coordinator. When I retired, all they had, I think there were probably half a dozen designated people throughout the province. And, if you had a problem, whatever, you knew how you could get a hold of them.

In terms of Member support, it was suggested that there has been a somewhat successful attempt to debunk the psychological stigma in the Force.

> I don't think it's as much, like we discussed before, taboo to go for counselling for Members or wives as it used to be.

> I think so [he has been able to openly communicate with his spouse]. And, even through the years, periodically you're on course, they'd have someone come in for a couple of hours and talk about, you know, how do you relieve stress and have a psychologist come in and talk about all these things. So yeah, at least you were exposed to some of the ideas that are out there. Like, don't keep things bottled up inside. Whether it played a part unknowingly [in sustaining his marriage], I guess that's possible.

In particular, one Member participant discussed the usefulness of Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISDs) following major incidents.

> After that first plane crash, there was a critical incident stress debriefing at the fire hall and we all talked about it and things like that. And you know, when you talk about support from the Force, that's one of the areas where they've come about, where they've learned to listen to their people and know that those critical incident stress debriefings are good. And training some people in doing those debriefings has been good. So, in thinking of that, that's where there's support for the Member.

Another resource in place that was identified as particularly helpful was the Human Resources Management System (HRMS) at *Transfer Time*. Participants explained that despite agreeing to be transferred anywhere in Canada, they were each provided with the opportunity to complete the HRMS form, in which they indicated

preferences in where they would like their next posting to be. Many participating Members noted that they filled out this form together with their spouse.

> When we came to [current posting], we had to fill out the HRMS form, that basically says where you would go.

> I know that at the times that I was subject to transfer, one of our concerns was well, is there a hospital that [wife's name] could work at. But, you know, things have changed so much because now, if I was in the Force I could indicate places I was prepared to go and I could make sure that I specified I would only go to communities where there was a hospital, at least if not in that community, within a reasonable driving distance. We couldn't do those sorts of things [back when we were subject to transfers to new postings]. Well, you could put down what you wanted, but the chances of it being **followed,** you know, that's a little different. Whereas now, I think they really do [consider the Members' and Members' families preferences]. And also, people aren't being transferred quite as frequently—nine, ten years in a spot is not uncommon, whereas, when I spent ten and a half years in [name of town], and I really never did refuse a transfer, just that things worked out for me there and we enjoyed the community. That was the exception then. Especially in a rural detachment. Whereas now, nine, ten years, that's not uncommon, providing it works for the detachment and for the Member and everyone involved.

Although there was much discussion about whether the Force should be supportive of the Member's family as a whole, many agreed that at the front-line officer level, there often was a *Cohesive Member Community*. In general, there was the notion that the Member-to-Member support was strong across the country.

> When we first were in the RCMP, I actually thought they were [RCMP was supportive of families], yeah. The guys themselves are really supportive of one another. We'd go anywhere in Canada and drop into a detachment and it was like they're old buds. They've all gone through that same six months [at Depot]. They all have something in common.

> I suppose supportive families in talking about the smaller units, there's always somebody in the smaller units, and not always the smaller units, I suppose the larger units, I haven't been in the very larger units, but as far as getting together, somebody there trying to get together to have family gatherings. It helps to talk with other members wives' too and other family members, and the kids getting together and discussing things. That

> comes through play, through interaction with children [of other police spouses]. And I suppose there are those gatherings at Christmas, at Easter, or more or less general bar-b-ques this kind of thing. And it has to be the interaction, you know, "How are things going with you?" "How are you getting along in your community?" "Where are you going to go?" You know all that general chit chat. But it all helps in your perception of how you're doing, where you're going, I suppose there's that little interaction. As for as the Force, the Members getting together and being supportive of each other and trying to involve the families also.

This Membership level of support was highlighted particularly by Members who discussed the importance of mentor influences throughout their career. Many noted pivotal figures, early in their career, who reminded them of the importance of their family within the larger context of their dedication to the Force.

> It happened for me through a conversation with a Member that I worked with in the [name of posting] who I really, really respected because to me, he was the ultimate, all-around policeman. He was the type of person that the worse the situation was, the calmer he was. And I always try to model myself after him. And one day, we were sitting down just having lunch, and this was even a long time before, probably three or four years before I met [wife's name] and he said "why do you work?", and I kind of looked at him and he said "I work so I can make money and be with my family, and that's my number one priority all the time". And I said, "you know, that's the right thing, that's the right attitude".
>
> I said this to a Member years ago, and I forgot that I even said it. But this is really interesting because this guy is now an officer. He came back 20 years later and said "do you remember when you told me this"? And I think it is advice that I think is something I would tell a newly married person. What ever you do, whatever behaviour you become involved in, will you make your mother proud? And will it make your community proud? If you can say "yes" to both of those things, then I'd say go ahead and do whatever you want. And the same thing would be within a relationship, with someone getting married.

In terms of spousal support at the front-line level, spouses offered differing opinions. Some spouses agreed that they felt supported by other spouses within the detachments where they were posted; however, others described not experiencing much support. This appeared to be dependent on the specific detachment that each spouse

found themselves in, as spousal support networks did not seem to be a universal experience.

> Yeah. Quite often there is a support system that informally sets up. And I know at first when you're new in a town, especially in a town, maybe not in a city you wouldn't notice it because people aren't as close here, but in a town, that the people that were already existing in the community would give the new Member's wife a call and invite her over for coffee or invite her maybe to go and look at something in town or to go to a store and see what's there. That's a lot of help to a young Member ['s spouse] that is left alone for long periods of time. On her own.
>
> I don't think the wives were as close as the guys. Because they're very diverse for one thing. Lots of different interests—they may have nothing in common, other than their husband's a policeman. Which does give you something. Well, I think of all the men teachers at work. I may not have anything in common with any of their wives. Well, it would be the same thing with RCMP wives, other than the fact that my husband's a policeman, I may have nothing in common with these people. That doesn't mean that you can't meet and that, but to actually be really good friends with....

3.2.3.3 Construct: Has a Long Way to Go (Especially for the Families)

Participants, both Members and spouses, identified that the Force's role, in terms of spousal or familial support in particular, *Has a Long Way to Go*. Two specific aspects emerged that participants identified as requiring focus. In one aspect, participants discussed their perception that *Family Support is Lacking at All Levels*. In general, participants talked about how the organisation provided little support for the family.

> But, and she'll probably explain this to you, there isn't a lot of support for her.
>
> And for other things, I don't think there's a whole lot that the RCMP really does for your spouses or anything like that.
>
> I don't find them overly supportive at all. I'm sure there's things that they do that are very supportive. And I can't speak as the organisation, I can only speak for myself.

Participants referred to issues around crisis support as also lacking. Although relatively rare, Members do experience crisis situations in which they may get injured or killed on duty. Inevitably, the family is acutely involved in these situations. Those participants who had found themselves in this position suggested that they experienced little support.

> I think, ideally, they [the RCMP] would probably think that they were [supportive of Member's families]. But I've never gotten a call from a shift Corporal saying "It's OK, everything's fine". I never got any kind of counselling or anything like that for [name of serious incident] either. Although it seems to me, I think there was somebody that was available, but I don't recall being contacted. I can't remember. That one might be iffy. But it's not usually a general practice for them to kind of say, "So how are you doing"?
>
> If there's a major incident going on and they're away for a while, [it is important for the RCMP] to not forget about the families. Because, they're the ones sitting there waiting, and maybe there's not that communication with an NCO to call the family. I think that's a management thing that they might want to think about. Sometimes you don't have any answers for the family, but just to know that they care enough to talk to the family, just to say "we don't really know anything, but we're just phoning to see how you're doing". Something like that.

Participants also commented that although the M/EAP programme is a welcome option, many were still hesitant to use this outlet. Some also suggested that they were not entirely familiar with the process involved in accessing M/EAP as a resource. Thus, further efforts to promote this option might be warranted.

> I know, going through that [the M/EAP programme]—I don't even know where to find that [contact information] in our office right now. I know it's around somewhere, but I couldn't tell you where it is.
>
> One of the things the Force has done over the years is introduced the M/EAP or MAP coordinators now. Those are relatively new. I think it's only in the last 10 or so years that that's come about. Most Members haven't really bought into that yet because there's a stigma with it. You know, going to see a counsellor. Most of us, including myself, don't want to see counsellors. There's a stigma to that. But, I think it's a good idea

> because, if we introduce it to them coming into the RCMP, as a couple, if they're a married couple and you can bring them into a course and say, "You've got M/EAP". Because M/EAP isn't just for the RCMP Member himself, it's for his spouse or for her spouse. And it's a good thing to be aware of. It's an excellent thing to be aware of.

Another aspect in which participants suggested that the Force may have a *Long Way to Go* was in terms of leadership. Participants in the current study suggested that there is an *Unbalanced Leadership* in general, suggesting that those in command work the longest hours and fail to demonstrate a healthy work-home balance.

> I think that, as people try to go through the ranks and get to maybe the officer level or things like that, you hear from every different officer that just got commissioned to the Inspector rank that they're putting in 16-18 hour days. Where's the balance when you have 18 hours at work and 6 hours at home?

There was also the suggestion that the *Force Puts the Force First*, and that the primary focus for the organisation is what is best for the organisation as a whole. Rarely are the needs of the individual Members or their families considered.

> I believe the Force thinks the Force comes first, family comes second, in reality.

> So, when I say the organisation really doesn't care, I don't think they do. The job is getting done, that is their primary—that is what they want done. I think they feel bad when relationships go sour, but we are so hung up on getting the job done, that we just sell everything else out.

> The one thing that really made it difficult, like with transfers and promotions—they're very self-serving and they will just screw you, big time. It's everything for the organisation. They don't care about individuals. And he got jerked around quite a few times. We've ended up doing OK through our own perseverance, but it really caused a lot of stress. I tried to tell him that they are self-serving, they do not give a rat's ass. Yes, they want you to work for them, but your personal needs are not important to them and neither are mine. You have to take care of yourself. And it did take him a while to realise that they didn't care about him. He had a commodity that they wanted.

> But it's always what's best for what's best for community. It's best for the community if I work 24 hours a day, never have a day off—it's great for the community, but what about our relationships? Because we have a life too. But they really don't seem to be all that overly interested in the Member.

3.2.4 Summary and Implications of RCMP Marriage is Like No Other: The Effecting and Affected Components

The three super-constructs, *Effecting Components: The Demanding Nature of the Job*, *Affected Components: It is Our Life*, and *The Force's Role: Has Come A Long Way...To Go,* comprise one main theme: ***RCMP Marriage is Like No Other: The Effecting and Affected Components***. A range of issues identified by participants are encompassed within this theme. Participants identified how the distinct and diverse challenges presented by the RCMP made their "police marriage" unique in many ways. Members described their job as very rewarding and the career as one that they were extremely passionate about. Participants also confirmed, however, that police work involves a number of factors that can contribute to work-family conflict, including pervasive, all-encompassing job demands, unpredictability, and rotational shiftwork. Previous researchers have reported similar findings from police forces outside of Canada (Anshel et al., 1997; Brooks & Piquero, 1998; Sims & Sims, 1998; Thompson et al., 2001; Violanti & Aron, 1995); thus, it appears as though police in the Canadian context share similar experiences (also see Lewis, 1999). An additional component, particularly relevant to the RCMP, is the issue of transfers, which presents a number of challenges that can result in significant demands on the marital relationship and the family as a whole.

In addition to the influences of job demands, participants outlined the many ways in which their life was shaped by influences of the job; in particular, the undeniable home-work connection. As others have identified (e.g., Jones & Fletcher, 1996), participants in this study confirmed that the negative spillover of work on home life appeared to be much stronger than the negative effects of home life on work.

Spouses of police officers are also greatly affected by the profession. Specifically, participants highlighted the increased family responsibilities due to rotational shiftwork, public scrutiny, lack of access to family support (particularly in isolated postings) and being faced with and having to cope with the potential dangers of the job, many of which have also been highlighted as police spouse experiences by previous researchers (e.g., Aharon, 1984; Alexander & Walker, 1996; Bell, 1988; Gentz & Taylor, 1994; Gist & Taylor, 1996; Inwald, et al., 1994; Kirschman, 1997; Scrivner & Reese, 1994; Stark[-Adamec], 1995; Stone, 1999). In addition, participants discussed the sacrifices particular to spouses, due to the frequent transfers of their police-spouse, which often meant giving up not only their career, but their relationships within the community, as well as repeatedly having to uproot their family.

The *Force's Role* also emerged as a factor in the marital relationship. Although there was an acknowledgement by Members and spouses that the Force has worked towards creating resources to promote healthier Members, there was a general consensus that the Force needs to focus more attention on the family. Similar to Lewis's (1999) findings, there was the indication that the relationship between the Force and its Members is strained at times, as a result of differing overall visions for future direction. In light of the diverse and encompassing demands that participants identified within this theme as

shaping and having an impact upon the spouse and the family, the Force's role will undoubtedly be significant in addressing and perhaps mitigating some of these factors.

3.3 Theme Two: Staying Together: What it Takes and What We Need—Sub-Constructs and Constructs

The second of the two themes that emerged from participant responses was entitled ***Staying Together: What it Takes and What We Need.*** Within this theme, participants addressed one of the initial goals of this study, which was to form a clearer theoretical understanding of the factors that contribute to maintaining a long-term marriage, in light of the stressors of police work. This theme was comprised of four super-constructs. Three super-constructs emerged as coping responses to the challenges of the job identified by participants within the first theme (see Table 5). More specifically, participants provided insights and identified maintenance strategies they used to cope with some of the challenges and demands of police work identified within the first theme, and these included: *Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands*, *Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First* and *The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward.* The second goal of this study, which was to provide recommendations and potential intervention strategies for the Force, emerged within *The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward.* Within the fourth super-construct that emerged within this second theme (see Table 6) the necessity of a strong foundation, beyond that of the Force's influence, was reflected. This additional super-construct was entitled *Underneath It All: Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage*. This super-construct will be discussed first. The remaining three super-constructs, as outlined briefly above, will then be discussed in turn.

Table 5

Comparison of the Super-Constructs that Emerged within the Two Themes

THEMES:	RCMP MARRIAGE IS LIKE NO OTHER: THE EFFECTING AND AFFECTED COMPONENTS OF THE JOB	STAYING TOGETHER: WHAT IT TAKES AND WHAT WE NEED
SUPER-CONSTRUCTS:	*Effecting Components: The Nature Of The Job* →	*Dealing With The Effecting Components: Balancing The Demands*
	Affected Components: It Is Our Life →	*Dealing With The Affected Components: Us First*
	The Force's Role: Has Come A Long Way...To Go →	*The Force's Role: Continuing With The Momentum And Moving Forward*
		Underneath It All: Necessities And Normalities Of Any Marriage

3.3.1 Super-Construct: Underneath It All: Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage

Within this super-construct (see Figure 6), participants identified the significance of having a strong relationship *Underneath It All.* Participants outlined the *Necessities* that they identified as essential in any marital relationship, functioning as the critical foundation. Relational characteristics that are fundamental in the development of close relationships have been identified by previous researchers (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2001; Fehr, 1993; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2001; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b), including specific factors that are primary to the development of sustained relationships. The *Normalities*, or expected experiences that may be common to many marriages, also emerged within this super-construct (see Table 6).

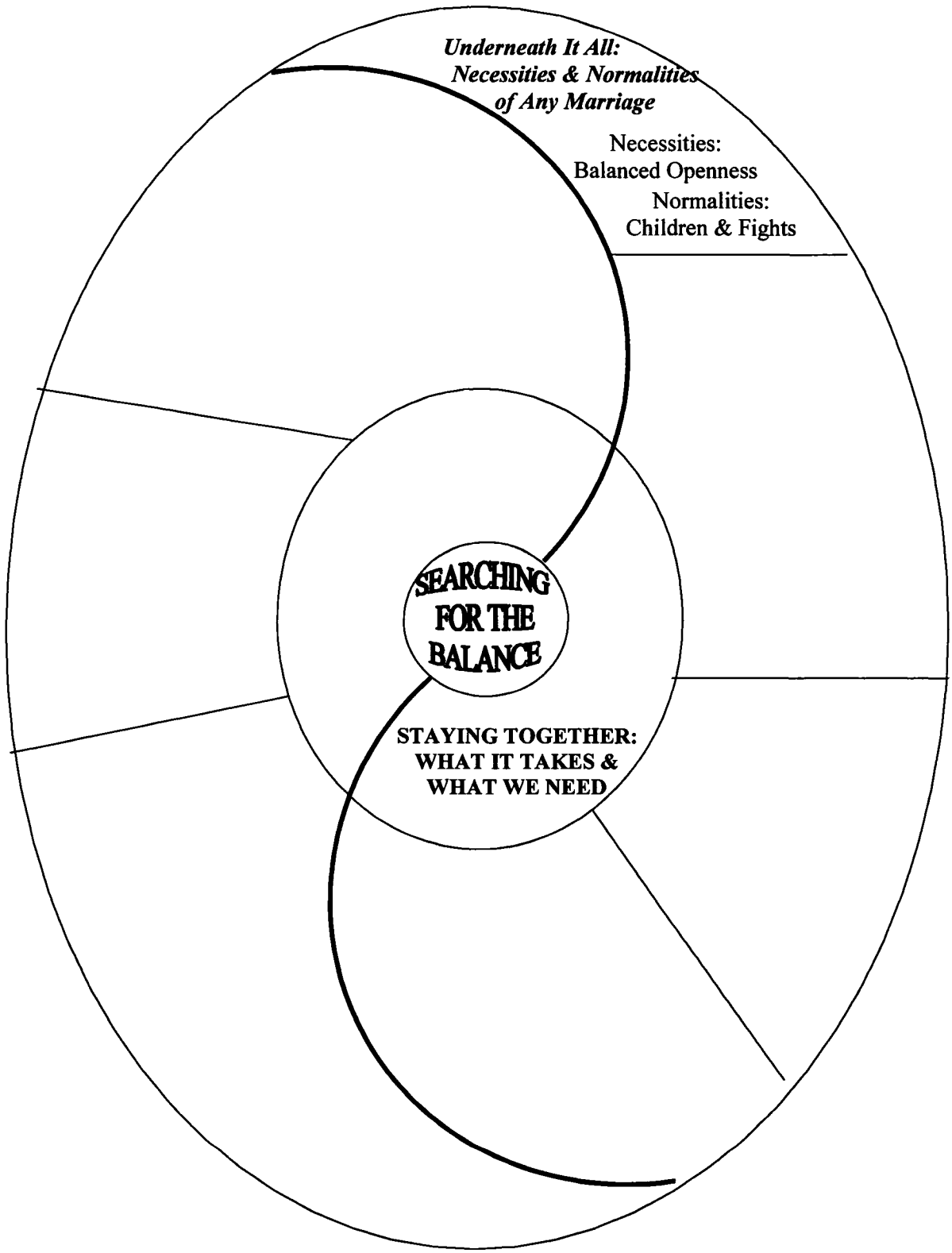

Figure 6. Underneath it All: The Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage

Table 6

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "Underneath It All: Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
Underneath It All: Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage	Necessities: Balanced Openness	Solid Foundation
		Open Communication Always
		Balanced Identities and Interests
		On the Same Page
	Normalities: The Children & The Fights	The Child Phase: Balancing Before and After
		Inevitable Rough Patches

3.3.1.1 Construct: Necessities: Balanced Openness

Within the *Necessities: Balanced Openness* construct, participants identified components that were considered necessary in any long-term marriage. Participants described a *Solid Foundation* as essential to most marriages, which they suggested was necessary irrespective of the profession that either partner was involved in.

> Jeeze, that's a good question [how they sustained their marriage in light of the stressors of police work]. I think first of all we had a strong relationship.
>
> Just making sure that you have a close relationship to begin with. A trusting relationship.
>
> I think that what happened with a lot of our friends is that they never worked at it during the time of the marriage. It's not something that you just say "OK, I'm married". You have to work on it every day, you have to make concessions, you have to put your foot down, you have to do different things. So I think in that regard, we've done what we've had to do all along in our marriage. And then, when the policing stuff comes into it, we deal with that as well.

In line with what many researchers have suggested (e.g., Burleson et al., 2000; Gottman, 1999; Punyanunt-Carter, 2004), communication between couples has been conceptualised as the fundamental basis of solid relationships. Participants identified

Open Communication Always as integral to their relationships. Specifically, many highlighted the importance of talking about all aspects of life that affected their marriage, and doing so often. Throughout the identified "necessary" components, participants repeatedly referred to the importance of their ability to communicate effectively. One Member referred to his spouse's suggestion to "think out loud" as a remedy for his tendency to "shut down" when he was dealing with something difficult, work-related or otherwise.

> And that's [maintaining a solid relationship] based on our communication, I think. Our ability to talk and, not only regarding police work, in all facets—raising our child, or different things. We don't – we kind of made a pact that we don't really stew on anything. If something is bothering us, we get it out. And I think that open—I don't want to use the RCMP clichés, but the open and honest bilateral communication [laughs], for us has been really good.
>
> And I think that the communication thing [with your spouse] is the **most** important thing—and it's not only in a police marriage, I think it's in every marriage. But, it's just really—they want to know what's going on. They really want to know.
>
> I think since that point, I've really stressed too that I really needed for him to be talkative and open. I need him to be telling me what he's thinking, even if it's not anything good or bad. Just "think out loud". So that's been our coping mechanism, when things start breaking down. Like you say, there's just kind of those "red flags".
>
> Sometimes, I guess the biggest impact is sometimes, and this has been since I've been a Member, is I'm quiet. I'm more thinking—what's going on and different things. And we're built on communication and we try to communicate as much as we can, but sometimes [wife's name] says to me "why don't you think out loud". So, then I start "this is what I'm thinking about, this is what I'm thinking about".

Further, many participants referred to the necessity "never to quit talking". Although many participants described giving each other space during disagreement, many agreed that they always returned to an issue that required resolution.

> Just a lot of talking I guess. Yes. A lot of talking. And going to our separate corners and think about it and talk some more. I don't know, bantering back and forth. You've got to talk it out.
>
> I have thought much about what I would say to a newly married spouse of a police officer, I didn't know if I had anything to offer. I think the best advice I could offer would be to talk to your spouse, and never quit talking, even if you feel as though you have said the same thing a million times.
>
> But again, you've got to talk [with your spouse]. You definitely have to talk. If not, like I said, it will come out some other way. Some other way down the road, some other way, it'll just be, "Oh my God. How come you didn't talk about that before?"
>
> We did a lot of talking. That was—maybe not even communication about work—well, maybe some work was involved. But definitely we talked and talked and talked. The kids would go to bed and we'd go to bed and we'd talk and talk, and talk. It felt like nothing was changing. It took a long time to work through it, but we talked till we dropped. We might leave it for a day, but then we'd start again. Yeah, probably talking and talking until we could reach some kind of a compromise. But it sometimes felt like nothing was changing. It took so long to work through a problem. That was probably it. I think of the times that we would go to bed and talk and talk and talk, and really, until we were both too tired to do it anymore. And then start again in a couple of days when we both revived a little bit, you know [laughing]. Probably talking, communicating, and compromising. Once you both knew how each other felt, and, you know, you're raising kids, different things, life changes. And for sure [husband's name] isn't one that really likes change. It takes a long time, especially for [husband's name] to come around to changes.

Another fundamental marital component that emerged was *Balanced Identities and Interests*. This construct was representative of participants' suggestions that couples who stay together have activities and interests that they enjoy doing together, balanced with the notion that maintaining one's own sense of self was also imperative. Many participants discussed compromising on occasion and learning to enjoy new activities with their spouse, as a means of spending time together (similar to the networking strategy proposed by Stafford and Canary [1991]). Others also reiterated the joy they

took in doing things on their own and suggested that they sometimes then appreciated more the activities they did together.

> Yes, we do have some interests that are in common but we don't share everything in common. He's very interested, for example, in, let's say scuba diving and I've never scuba dived in my life. We usually go away in the winter time and one of things we look for to have in the place that we go to is the scuba diving because that is his interest. And I wouldn't want—I want that too because I want it for him.
>
> And I think that's what it exactly is [the key to sustaining a police marriage]—it's mostly a balance.
>
> And we do try to do separate things. Because I like to hear how she felt in doing different things and I still play hockey and go to tournaments and things like that. It's good. That separation makes, you know if you go away for a weekend, especially now with a child, it makes it so much better coming home. It's always looking forward to coming home.

While participants articulated this necessity of maintaining balanced interests and identities, many also discussed the importance of being *On the Same Page* for many things that are considered critical in a relationship. For example, participants noted that it was important to have similar morals and values, especially when it came to parenthood. The spirituality component was also referred to here by participants and they noted that it was very helpful to their relationship to have a partner who shared similar ideals.

> You know like, obviously, we've always had the same sort of beliefs or morals.
>
> Well, you know, everybody falls in love. So you all start in love. And you think that's enough. But I think over the years, one of the most important things, is your moral values. I really think underlying everything, if your family values and your moral values are the same—it doesn't mean that your families are exactly the same, where you come from, but if your families are the same and your moral values, that's the rock that's underneath all that. And if you both feel the same about those kinds of things, you can pretty well weather anything. That doesn't mean our marriage has never been rocky. But when it's underneath that, you believe and commit, you believe in your family, you believe your kids should both have a mom and dad, you believe you shouldn't be yelling

> and screaming in front them, even though you feel like ripping his hair off [laughing]. If you believe in those things, you ride out those rocky times.
>
> I think maybe too what helped with us as far as communication maybe in the later years, past five or six years, is we've become more involved in our spiritual life. And that's definitely helped in our communication. Enabled us to open up a little more and realise where the main focus is, where the focus is in life. And it also helped with our family life definitely. Our's is a different situation too because we were both going different ways spiritually, different religions. So we kind of immersed together and that definitely helped with our focus. And uh, I think whatever relationship, whatever occupation, I think that definitely helps, it definitely helps.

Commitment has been identified by many researchers as a critical relational characteristic essential to the development of strong relationships (e.g., Adams & Jones, 1997). Participants confirmed that, in their experience, a strong sense of commitment is something that was also an important component.

> Well, here's a commitment that we made to each other.
>
> Probably on both sides—the commitment.
>
> I don't know, I guess I think that you've got to give more than 100%. Just going 50% isn't going to cut it. There's going to be times when you give a little more, other times when it's the other partner gives a little bit more.

One final aspect identified as fundamental to being *On the Same Page* was maintaining things in common with each other. Some participants discussed the difficulty of "growing apart" over the years and noted that it often took work to keep a common connection. Other participants also referred to the notion that sometimes it meant searching for things in common, or developing common interests based on knowing what their partner enjoyed.

> I just see all the failed marriages around us and I think people sometimes don't continue to have something in common.

> It [scuba diving] doesn't mean anything to me, but it does because it's his pleasure. Or, it used to be, he's always enjoyed football. He's a die hard [team name] fan. [laughs] I came to enjoy football as a result of listening to him always talking about oh, they've signed up so and so, or they've let so and so go, or whatever. And now, for example, since we've moved back to [province] we've had season tickets so we go to all the home games. **I enjoy** it too now, but it isn't something I came in myself enjoying; I learned to enjoy it through my husband.
>
> Have at least a common interest. Even if it's just on Tuesday nights you go out to a show or something. You need something that you can look forward to doing with your husband, or mate I should say.

3.3.1.2 Construct: Normalities: The Children and the Fights

The second part of the construct that makes up *Underneath it All* were issues and experiences that participants identified as the *Normalities* of most marriages. Participants identified *The Child Phase* as being a significant transitional point in their marriage. As others have also pointed out (e.g., Gottman & Notarius, 2000; Perren, et al., 2003), it is a common experience for couples who chose to have children to experience a change in their marital relationship. As noted above, all participants in the study either had children or were expecting their first child at the time of the interviews. Consequently, many participants noted that they had been or currently were in a phase in which their children became the primary focus of their lives.

> We weren't really good about doing that [making time for themselves as a couple] when the kids were really little, it was really hard. And we didn't have any resources, didn't have anybody to leave the kids with, or anywhere to go if we did [laughing].
>
> You have to [make time for each other without the children]. But there are times where it slides because you still see each other lots but you have to make a little bit of an effort to get it back on track. Sure it's [the marriage] just humming along there, but most of your focus is on the kids.

Those who were parents of older children identified that they too found it difficult, at times, to keep their marital relationship as important as the relationship with their

children. In retrospect, many of these participants expressed the importance of attempting to maintain a "balance" between the marital relationship and the demands of their children.

> Probably our biggest downfall was from the time the kids were six until the time they were 16, doing things only for them. We would just run out of money and out of energy to do things together. We did it as a family. We did the odd thing as a couple, but we didn't have very many dates in those years. One thing—by the time we'd done hockey, ringette, brownies, there wasn't very much money left for a date and we used to talk about that. That was one of the things that used to bother me—that we didn't do much as couple. We did lots as a family.
>
> And we work at building our marriage and not just being parents.
>
> We know so many people who have built their whole lives just around their children, or not built—they just exist, I think. The day to day routine and not really think about what they're doing. And who, then when their kids get older, their marriage dissolves because there is nothing there. We know so many people who that's happened to and I've always said I refuse to let that happen.

Another aspect considered as a common experience by many participants was that of *Inevitable Rough Patches.* In line with Gottman and Silver's (1999) prediction, successful relationships are not those that are devoid of conflict. Many participants identified difficult phases in their marriage, sometimes related to having to deal with traumatic times, including death and illness.

> Oh yeah. Don't they have those little periods where 1-5 [years of marriage] it's adjusting, and then 5 [years of marriage] to whatever it's "oh my God [laughs], I want to get rid of you". Oh yeah. Oh definitely. Every relationship I'm sure has that period. We've gone through that rocky road. I don't think it really had anything to do with the RCMP. I really don't think it had anything to do with that. Maybe if I thought about it more, maybe I would say different. But, no I don't. I think it's just relationship period.
>
> To say that we haven't had our share of challenges, that would be a lie. Whether we had more challenges than other couples who were not in the

> RCMP and in a similar environment, I don't know. But we just worked through them.
>
> Well, there have been tough times. And I'll tell you, after [son's name] died, there was tough times. And I remember there was a real separation between us.
>
> My husband always said, "Never go to bed mad" and I can't say that I ever didn't do that, because I did it lots [laughs].

3.3.2 Super-Construct: Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands

Within the super-construct *Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands* (see Figure 7), participants identified strategies and insights that they have employed in dealing with some of the challenges of the job that they identified within the first theme. Four constructs emerged: *The Diversity of Challenges Balancing Act, Shiftwork Strategies: Keep the Connection, Transfers-Postings: Together,* and *Danger Potential: Knowledge, Experience & Support* (see Table 7).

Table 7

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands	The Diversity of Challenges Balancing Act	Learning to Balance the Demanding Nature
		Balanced Partnership Necessity
	Shiftwork Strategies: Keep the Connection	Keep Connected
		Adjust Responsibilities
	Transfers-Postings: Together	Essential Co-Career/Transfer Planning
		That First Post and Beyond: The Learning Balance
		Rural Postings: Learning the Tricks of the Trade
	Danger Aspect: Knowledge, Experience & Support	Easier with Knowledge and Experience
		Training Confidence
		Family Connection
		No Worries

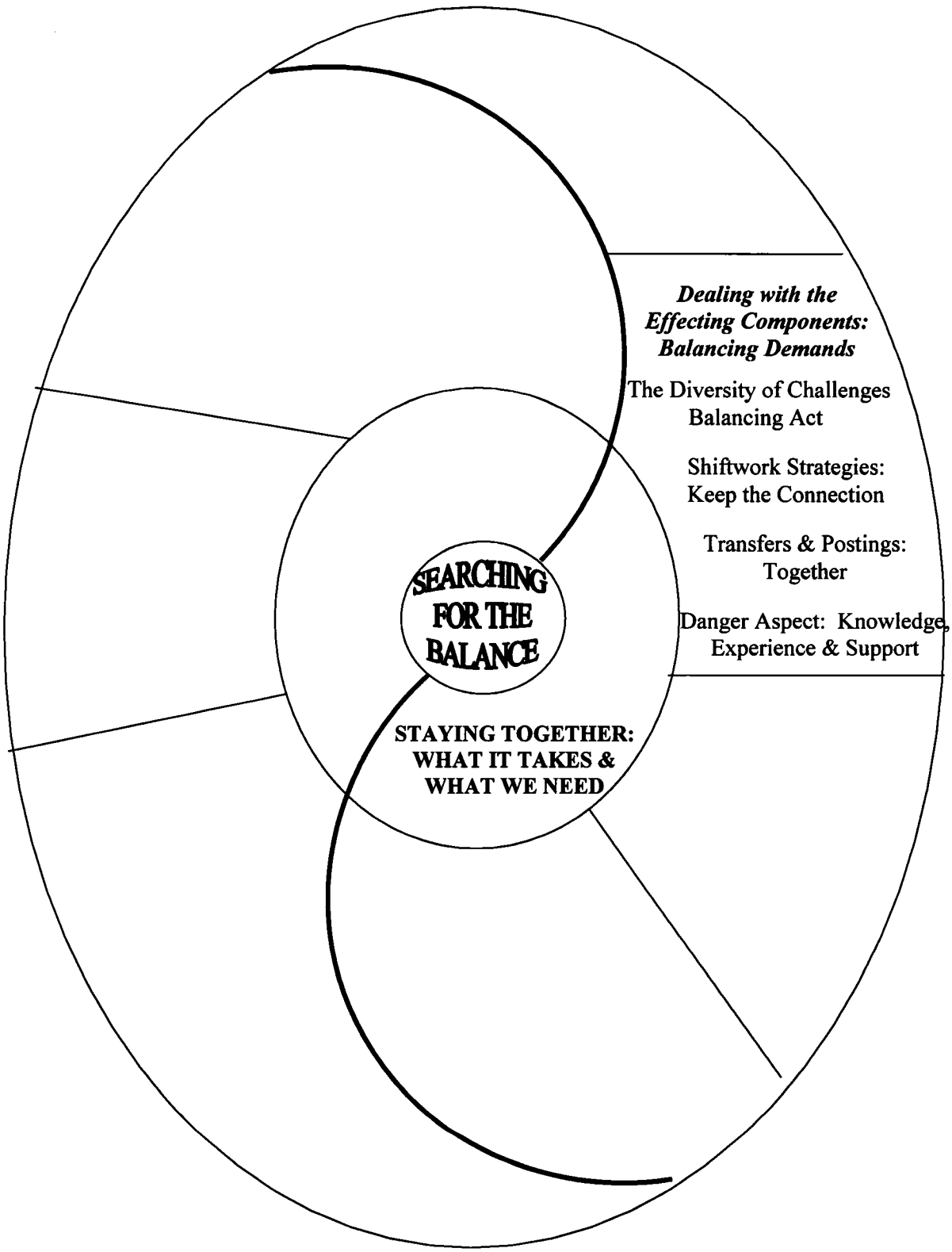

Figure 7. Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands

3.3.2.1 Construct: The Diversity of Challenges Balancing Act

As participants explained within the first theme, the job of an RCMP officer comes with a plethora of demands presented by the work, many of which are often very taxing not only on the officer, but on the family as well. Some of these demands include loyalty by the Member and being on duty "24-7", figuratively and literally in some situations. Participants suggested that coping with this aspect of the job was a process and that they had to *Learn to Balance the Demanding Nature* of the job with their home life. Members and spouses alike discussed how it was not an uncommon experience for junior Members to have to work a lot of shiftwork, along with the expectation of voluntary overtime. At the same time, many Members described a desire to work a lot, especially in the early stages of their careers, because they simply loved their job and felt very dedicated to the organisation. Although many participants described going through this initial phase of over-dedication, some suggested that Members who function more effectively between work and home are those who develop an awareness of the necessity to balance job demands and a desire to do well with the critical importance of family well-being. Interestingly, a key feature in the maintenance of the marital relationships from the Member's perspectives was that many noted that they continually had to work at balancing home and work; it was not something that they had necessarily achieved.

> RCMP Members, we get caught up in what we do. We strive to do our best. I think at some point and time in your career where you start saying, "What am I doing this for?" You start taking stock in what the efforts, the energy, the baggage that you accumulated, and baggage being negative baggage, "Who am I doing this for? And am I doing it for me or am I doing it for the needs of the Force?" And each of us are different. Some of us walk into the Outfit having a clear vision that my family is going to be first so they're 9-5, punch the clock and they're out the door, no VOT—VOT being voluntary overtime. And then there are others of us who get in and we just want to be the best cop there is and prove it to the

> Force. And we strive and we work and we work and we work. And after years of doing it, there's one day where you have this epiphany, "What am I doing? Who am I hurting? I'm hurting my family". We, I think most Members do come to that realisation. I think most Members do put their family on the shelf, work hard, hard, hard. Then one day they realise, I'm not doing myself any favours. Because at the end of your career—and I've seen this, this is the other thing—I'm still struggling for that balance. But like with my father, when he walked out the door of the RCMP, when he retired, all you are is a number. Your regimental number is something that is issued to you, it's unique to you and it will always be yours. When you walk out, that's all it is. You're regimental number such and such and you're either serving or retired.
>
> But, I think there's an awakening one day that you realise this is a job and my family is permanent. The job is temporary. It might be 20, 25, 30 years, but it's temporary. Whereas the family is permanent, if you handle it right. I think it comes with maturity. Yeah, maturity I guess. Life experiences, where you start to do some self-reflecting.
>
> But I'm consciously looking for that balance, where the difference before [in his first marriage that failed] was, I didn't care.
>
> I think it's like any job. In the beginning you're enthusiastic. You want to do well and so your boundaries may not be as good and you're jumping into it all the time when you should be saying, "No, this is my day off". And so, it was a process, and he did learn that he has to be able to get away from his job.

In the process of going through this initial phase of their careers that appeared to be predominantly demanding, many of the Members noted the importance of keeping "the big picture" in perspective. Further, participants noted that despite wanting to be "the best Member I can be", learning to balance the demands of the job became more important.

> I think that I tend to look at the big picture.
>
> She's made sacrifices for me. And now that we have [daughter's name], it's time for me to make sacrifices as well. If we're somewhere and somebody offers me a promotion, of course you're thinking, "Oh, great career advancement", but you have to think of the family as well. How is this going to impact everyone? It's easy to just say, "Oh I'll go there, I'll have a great job", but you render somebody else or both of your family

> members, or three of them maybe at that time, unhappy, then it's not worth it. So, I was happy to come here for the promotion. Some of my buddies went up to the Arctic to get them and I'm thankful—although here feels like the Arctic sometimes, but I'm thankful that we never had to go to the Arctic to get my promotion.
>
> Yeah. Well, I think he's been really able to balance that [family and work demands] out. He's moved up really fast, but I feel like we've done it better than a lot of other couples have. I think we have.
>
> The ones that I've seen fail are the ones where the Member was just, what I believe, was just very self-centred and where they didn't work as a team and her needs were not seen as being as important.

The focus of *Learning to Balance the Demanding Nature* appeared primarily to be the responsibility of the Member to come to terms with. In the other half of the *Diversity of Challenges* construct, participants also identified the *Balanced Partnership Necessity* throughout this process. Particularly because life within the RCMP can be demanding not only on the Member, but on the family as well, the necessity of having both marital partners "on board" emerged as essential in dealing with the demands of the job.

> I really think, in our marriage, I think we really [husband's name] has approached—or living in communities, not his job necessarily, but living in communities, I think we've really approached it as part of a team. He's always really included me.
>
> I think at different times it's been both our personalities, at times it's been my willingness to let him do what he needs to do and knowing that his job is really important, at certain times and at times his willingness to really bend to my needs.
>
> I guess, hmm, if I was going to speak to the spouses [about how to sustain an RCMP marriage], I wouldn't speak to the spouses, I would speak to the couples, both because it's a partnership and both of them have to wear that responsibility. It really is something that both need to understand a little bit about what the other is going through.
>
> And understanding of the needs of one another. Find that balance. I think both have to work at that. Just on the spot thinking—I would approach both of them [the Member and the spouse]. Because I don't think you can say, "You as the wife of an RCMP officer, you have to do this". That's

> bullshit. You don't have to do anything. But I think that they have to sit down together and say, "This is what I do, and this is what I need to do. So, how do we work at that together so that we keep our relationship strong and well?

It was clearly articulated by many participants that seeing the "big picture" did not necessarily mean that the Member's career suffered or that their ability to be an effective Member was compromised. Instead, participants identified the importance of the spouse providing understanding and support of the job demands and that, given the sometimes crisis-driven-nature of the police work, family obligations may, at times, have to come second.

> That doesn't mean that they're [the family] the priority of the moment all the time, but overall they're the most important thing in the world. The Force is a job and it is important, but they [the family] come first. I'm not saying that he leaves the job because he's supposed to be at the school at 5 o'clock or whatever, but that they know that they're [the family] the most important to you.
>
> For me, it's the understanding from my wife. A big part of that, as I talked earlier, was who she was before. And that knowledge of the police thing. But she really, she **really** understands me. I think that's the best part.
>
> I think that's part of what makes the success of it is having support from the spouse.
>
> There are times where, in [name of sixth posting] when major stuff would happen and you know for the next week we're not going to see him, because he has to put his time there. So, accepting that and doing whatever we need to do at home to get him through that, but then after that say, "No".
>
> I think it's **very**, very important to respect what they do and to understand what they do and be flexible about it. But I also don't think it's good for it to be the most important thing in your lives ...I don't think it's healthy for each other.

At the same time, the other crucial component of the sub-construct *Balanced Partnership Necessity* was the Member's role in contributing to this balance by

understanding and appreciating the spousal sacrifices. This component was noted as essential in that the focus is generally on the Member's career and the requisite for the spouse to be supportive of that. Participants explained, however, that those couples who stayed together were those who truly regarded the RCMP marriage as a partnership and the spouse's contributions and sacrifices were not only considered, but appreciated.

> Make sure that they [the Members] don't forget what the spouse has to go through. They're aware that there's going to be emotional things that are going on—especially for a **new** policeman—that this person knew them as who they were before, and they may or may not change their personalities after being a policeman.
>
> I thought it was important that the people kind of realise—especially for the Member, for the Member to understand what the family is going to face as well. Because I think the Members' get so focused on their new career, their new identity—trying to take everything they learned in Depot, going to these new postings and these new towns with all of a sudden this new identity and these new roles, and they sort of expect that the family is going to be there. But they sometimes forget to sort of see it from the other person's point of view.

3.3.2.2 Construct: Shiftwork Strategies: Keep the Connection

Rotational shiftwork, especially early in a Member's career, was another aspect of the job that was identified as significantly affecting the marital relationship. Participants discussed specific strategies that they found helpful to *Keep Connected*, despite the often-disrupted schedules due to shiftwork. For example, participants described the importance of staying in touch with each other while on shift, either by coming home for meals, if possible, or adapting schedules so that family members could spend time together.

> Well, we talk a lot. Even when he's working, if he's working evenings, he still phones or I phone him at least once during the shift. And [husband's name] is really good at always coming home for meals if he can. So if he's working days on a Saturday and I'm here then he comes home at lunch.
>
> I drove by the house quite often actually. And tried to go home for dinner if I could and things like that.

> I know being in a small community, when I'm working days, she'd come and have lunch with me at the office. So we'd talk on my lunch break. We'd pack a lunch and meet at the office. We'd talk about what needs to be done that day when I get off of work or what we're going to do or what she's going to do. Plan our evenings.
>
> Even if he's working nights, I'll have supper at 9 instead. I'll try to adapt to his schedule. Or now that I'm off for the summer, then I'll try to go to bed later and sleep in later with him and then try and have a day. And then when I wasn't working there and he had a Wednesday, Thursday off, we'd have a holiday.
>
> Well, we probably have our little time at breakfast time where we'd sit at the table for 20 minutes and talk to each other about the day's events and whatever else was important. Or we'd talk about the kids if there was something, instead of doing it after supper, which most people come home and have supper and get caught up on the day's news. Here, basically, we did it in the morning and that worked.

As described in *Shiftwork Strains* within the first theme, participants noted that one of the difficult aspects of shiftwork was that they rarely had time off together. Participants suggested that they tried to ensure that when they did have time off together, they made plans to be together.

> Making time for each other, even if it is a couple hours. Making the best of your time together.
>
> I think you get used to it [shiftwork], you get used to planning your days that way. Whenever I have time off and she had time off we make a point of doing something together. It's not, "well, I'm going to go golfing this day with my buddies" or something like that. We make a point of doing things together. And I think it's been that way ever since I've been in. We've never really had a problem with it so far.
>
> You know, we go out on dates. But that's something that we've made a concerted effort at over the years.

3.3.2.3 Construct: Transfers-Postings: Together

As outlined above, transfers are one of the aspects of the RCMP that sets it apart from many city police forces. Participants expressed that dealing with this particular

requirement of the job was, at times, one of their most challenging tasks. In terms of effectively coping with the transfers, participants again discussed the importance of approaching it *Together*. Specifically, *Essential Co-Career/Transfer Planning* was highlighted by both Members and spouses. As one participant explained, it was important to sit down together with his partner and decide, before a pressure decision had to be made, where they were and were not willing to live as a couple. The HRMS form has been described as a helpful resource. Many participants identified the importance of completing the HRMS form together.

> Well, we took the map out and we said, "Well, where would we go?" And that was a common decision, so that if the phone rings, and somebody offers me [name of specific posting], then I know, I don't have to call home and say, "What do you think of going to [name of specific posting]". I can say, "Yes", because we've talked about it already. So there's that—you have to know what you're getting yourself into. I had put [name of current posting] down and I said, "Would you mind going to [name of current posting], because if you do, let me know now because I won't put it on". And then, the promotional opportunity comes and goes without me even knowing about it. If I haven't talked to her and the phone rings and they say, "Do you want to go to [name of current posting]" and I have to go home and I'm thinking, "Promotion. This would be a great job". Then I get home and she says, "No", then there's going to be resentment, isn't there? So, we have to talk about that before. So now we're in a situation where we're hoping to get back to [name of province] within one or two years from now, so we've already started talking about where we'd like to go. You know, we might even plan a trip to [name of place] to go and look around and say, "It looks nice on the map, but it doesn't look nice right here".

> But she's been great the whole time we've gone through it [the various demands of RCMP work]. You know, and that planning—"Would you go here or would you go here"...she's said to me, "When we go back to [name of province], I'd rather endure the financial hardships of being in [name of town] then going to [name of another town]". Well that's important for her to tell me that. Because I could go to [name of second town] in a heartbeat. I know I could go there, you know, it would good work for me, but she doesn't want to go there.

> So, we've sort of "succession planned" for ourselves that way, so I think that's maybe what makes us successful; we work through it together, we plan where we're going to be together, instead of the Member just doing that by themselves.

Although the physical location of the job that the Member was posted at was important, participants also outlined the necessity of understanding how the specific job requirements may affect the family as well. As participants have highlighted, there are such diverse opportunities within the RCMP that the job demands specific to each posting or section differ significantly (e.g., general duty versus drug section). Thus, participants also discussed the importance of communicating with their partner about the effect that specific job requirements might have on their relationship and their family.

> Even the jobs that he takes. I mean, he's made decisions often that would have benefited him as far as going up the ladder, but he's made a choice to not take them because it would affect our family life, it would affect me negatively and our relationship, because of the time [required in a specific position]. You know, like undercover jobs, things like that. And I've made concessions, and I think we both should. But you should be able to balance that out as well. And sometimes he's done things that would really benefit him job-wise and it's worked and vice versa, same with me as well. I think it's always about negotiating, that's basically what it was.

> If he ever did decide to take that position, OK, "What are we going to do? How are we really going to handle this, because we've seen what can happen". "Is it a good idea, first of all, if we decide, no, there's this position that's better and you'll still get the kind of experience you want. Let's do that instead." Maybe that's what it will come to. I think just treating the career together, as a couple, because it affects you so much as a spouse as well. I think that's what really makes us successful is that he really listens when I say, "Well, is that really going to be good for both of us?" and the different things on how it will affect us. And his career too—he wanted to put his name in for a position in [name of city] for training for the [name of section], compared to something else, I can't remember what it was. It was not that I really talked him out of going to the one in [name of city], but even just for his career, I could sorta see that maybe that's—just from listening to him and what his goals were, that that position wasn't really going to get him to where he wants to be. It's actually going to take him farther away. And that it would also have impacted our situation quite a bit. So, I think he's very good about

> listening and accepting my views too, in terms of what's best for us. So, working through it together is a very good thing, a very good coping mechanism, especially for the RCMP marriages because of the fact that there is that succession planning available. You have a HRMS form, you know exactly—make sure that spouse **knows** what's on that HRMS because if one day they say, you know, "We're going to Tuktoyuktuk"—well, in that case it's different because you don't go to the north unless they interview you.

The necessity to co-career plan was particularly relevant for Members who were married to other Members. Although very little research attention has been devoted to the issues faced by couples who are both police officers, participants in this situation discussed the necessity of planning moves that would be good for each of their respective careers, which was admittedly sometimes an added stressor.

> I guess, if you're going to get into a police marriage, you've got to—I'm just talking from both of us being police officers, because that's where we are—you've got to be willing to respect the other person's wishes too and their career aspirations. I've seen other Members couples who, one Member will get a promotion or get into a good position and the other one will have to move with them and then take a position that's less desirable. You've got to be willing to do that if you're in this situation. And I guess with a marriage that's a police officer and a civilian, unfortunately most of the time it happens where the civilian, who is usually the lady in the marriage, has to follow the man around and give up jobs and that's a lot of sacrifice.

> If you both have high aspirations to get higher in the Force, you've got to realise that you've got to compromise a bit. You're not always going to get your way. You've got to understand that the other Member wants to do things too. This move, one person benefits, the next move, maybe the other person benefits. I definitely see that.

Participants identified specific coping strategies related to the transfer process that they identified as beneficial in helping to maintain their marriage by offsetting some of the associated stressors. In particular, participants mentioned the importance of being close to their family, if it was at all possible. Although many understood that this

decision was sometimes out of their hands, choosing to be near family if the opportunity arose was identified as beneficial by most participants.

> So, we picked here just because family was closer.

> And maybe that's the reason that we managed because we've had some of those [family] supports to deal with it [the stressors of the job].

> Another thing I tell people is do whatever you can to be near your family—your support systems. We started off going to [name of province]. We've been very lucky because we've always had family around us. But there's been shit that has gone on in our family that there is **no** way I ever would have made it if I had not been close to my parents. Close to my parents and close to [wife's name] parents. In my heart, I don't think we ever would have made it. So, I would like to see Members do whatever you can to get back to your support system. If you hate your parents—don't go there. But if you have any sense of loving for your parents or your family whatsoever, I say go there. Be near them. Because that's what will get you through day to day, your family and your partner. Your family will get you through the stuff. Because there is going to be conflict in relationships, there's no doubt that it will happen. So you need something external, like your family, to get you through. The organisation doesn't care. They have other things to care about. So they're not going to be worried about you and your relationship. Family and friends will be.

Another specific aspect related to the transfer process was the decision for the spouse to "stay put" at one posting and have the Member spouse move. Although this situation may not be ideal, participants mentioned a number of reasons why they found this necessary for their situation, including the spouse's job and/or not wanting to move the family at a particular time.

> They [the Force] want me to go up to [name of husband's current posting]. He said, "I'm going up to [name of posting] honey", I said, "Bye" [laughs], I ain't going.

> You know, so it's an issue because [spouse's name] really doesn't want to go anywhere.

> There was a couple of times, [wife's name] was always very career orientated, and she heard about this northern nursing, so she went up to

> [name of place], where you worked on a reserve. She did that once for 7 weeks and then a week another time.

As outlined within the first theme, one of the most significant experiences within their marriage outlined by many participants was the first posting. It was described as a time when everything was new and that many associated changes were often overwhelming. In dealing with *That First Post and Beyond*, participants described the process of a *Learning Balance*. Some suggested that it would be wise for spouses and Members to "know what you're getting into" before entering into the Force. At the same time, however, many suggested that "no one can really tell you" and that the process of adapting to the life of an RCMP family is a matter of "learning as you go".

> I think, as time progresses, it gets easier too. I think our next posting will be easier to move to. Easier to make friends. Easier to get involved in the community. Because really this is the first time I've really lived away from home. Going to college, you live away from home for the school year, and then you come home and then you're home for the summer. Or playing hockey, I'd live away for the winter, come home and work in the summer and go again in the fall. So this is the longest I've ever been away from my family—almost three years. And for [wife's name] it's about the same. Because we were just 21—she was 21, I was 23 when we got married, so we were still pretty young, nowadays, to be getting married. Right now I'm 27 and she's 26, so we're getting older and more mature. A different outlook on life.
>
> But you know, I guess most couples just weather through it [successive postings]. And again, it's collecting the baggage as you go, and go, "Wow. That's something difficult. We better learn how to handle that".
>
> And it's [adjusting to RCMP life] gotten better I think, as each year goes on. But I think that comes with wisdom, experience, what have you. We've learned to deal with situations better as time goes.
>
> As we progressed along in my husband's career, it's more or less adapting to your environment and finding ways to get along in that environment, finding ways to **grow**. Each area you go to. Grow and develop in each area, whether through interaction with the community, interaction with service groups you get involved with. And we certainly have, along the

> years done that. And the last posting, which we are in now, is **definitely** a growing period for both of us, all of our family.

Because many RCMP detachments are located in rural settings, RCMP families will often be given a rural posting at some point during the course of their career. As outlined in *Rural Post Challenges* within the first theme, rural postings often involve a complex host of issues that can make living in the communities challenging. In particular, public scrutiny was identified as a difficult issue to deal with. Participants suggested a number of different strategies to cope with this aspect. For example, two participants noted that maintaining a residence outside of the town limits, on an acreage, was a helpful strategy.

> A big difference moving out into the country then when we were living in town [in terms of privacy]. When we were living in town, people knew when [husband's name] was on and when he was off and when we were gone, what we were doing and where we were. It was really nice when we moved out of town. The privacy.

> But I can tell you one thing, living out on an acreage—we lived in town for the first while that I was here—living out here makes a world of difference. We can do anything we want out here and nobody sees us. And the people that live around us are very nice. We have horses and stuff. People come by and say hi. It makes a world of difference living on an acreage.

Others suggested that they found it necessary to maintain some degree of separation or neutrality in their interactions within the community.

> Going into a community being transient, you don't get entwined with what "Joe" is doing. Perhaps they're talking about you and what you're doing, but, you just don't get involved with that.

> So, you just shake it off [public scrutiny]. Because you just realise people need something to talk about. It's a small town and they need to talk about me, it's fine. As long as you **haven't** put yourself in that [inappropriate position or situation]. Talks down in a couple weeks.

For the Members specifically, one indicated the necessity for leniency, at times, in the enforcement of some laws because, as she pointed out, the community in which she worked was also where she had to live.

> I'm expected to wear my seat belt—well, everybody is because it's the law; however, in [name of town], do we ticket every body whose not wearing one? No. It would be almost impossible for us to live here if we ran around giving tickets to everyone.

Another participant noted that during one posting it became necessary for their family to "transfer out", as the situation in the community became too difficult.

> And so the only other alternative with that was to leave and that's what we did.

Overall, however, spouses in particular identified the importance of a positive attitude in dealing with the diversity of challenges presented by the postings they experienced. This is in line with Stafford and Canary's (1991) positivity maintenance strategy, often employed by female spouses.

> I believe it's all in the attitude. The attitude at home.
>
> And again, it all depends on your attitude. It all depends on attitude. And you've seen a few negative attitudes in our experience....
>
> You just had to deal with it [stressors of RCMP life]. It's like a lot of things you have to do in the Force. You have to deal with it and get through it.

3.3.2.4 Construct: Danger Aspect: Knowledge, Experience, and Support

Within the first theme, the danger potential of police work was identified as a component that was always there in the background for both the Member and the spouse. Participants described strategies and offered some specific insights, concluding that when dealing with the *Danger Aspect: Knowledge, Experience, and Support* were necessary coping strategies.

In particular, participants suggested that coping with the dangerous components of the job became *Easier with Knowledge and Experience*. Many spouses recalled how their initial reaction to their partner being on nightshift or being called out in the middle of the night was very worrisome, and some remembered waiting up for their mate to return home. They also noted, however, that eventually the worry became less with exposure to this permanent component of the job.

> Yeah, [there was considerable concern for his safety] probably for the first few months that he started out there. I was really concerned. I think he was supposed to be off at 11—I think that was the shift, 3-11. So I'd wait up. So it comes to 12:30, 1:00, well I'd just be sick. Well that only can last for so long. You can't keep doing that over and over. But what happens is, they come home fine. And it's because something happened right at 11 and they had to stay and do it. OK. Well, when it happens over and over again, they come home safe, you just say, "How stupid can you be"? Really. You just worry yourself sick, and for what?" So you get to the point where you think, "What can you do about it?" Nothing. There is **no** sense in worrying. None. Until you get the phone call to come to the hospital, there is no sense in worrying about it. And I just didn't. I just quit worrying.

> The worry sometimes—when we first got in, I remember, his shift was 6 till 4 in the morning. If he wasn't home at four in the morning, I was sitting up straight in bed thinking about it. After a while of that, [husband's name] goes, "You're going to have to get used to this, otherwise you're going to be one tired woman for the rest of your life". So, a little bit of stress, but I'm getting more used to it.

> You do [worry]. But I think we went through that more in [name of first posting], when we first got together as a couple. You start thinking about, "Oh, what's he getting into". After a while, you have to just kind of turn it off. You can't dwell on it, otherwise you're going to drive yourself nuts.

Along the same lines, spouses noted that having some "insider understanding" of the components of the job was helpful in that it prevented them from worrying about "unrealistic" events. Spouses who had some knowledge of police work, either because they worked for the RCMP or were Members themselves, suggested that "ignorance is

not bliss" when it came to understanding what their Member spouse faced on the job and the likelihood that their spouses would become involved in dangerous situations.

> It's a little bit easier for me in some ways because I usually know the people involved that he's working with [because of her job as a civilian Member]. Or I sort of know the protocol they'll take and different things like that. So sometimes I think having an inside understanding of what's going on kind of helps too. If I didn't know anything about it, I might be more leery or worried. So sometimes I think that's the biggest factor that helps us because I do understand.
>
> I think that was one of the things too—going back—when I first thought of him going into the RCMP, it was like, "Oh man—you're out killing people and shooting people. There are murderers out there that are going to get you." But for the most part, you're driving around and maybe there's some kids throwing eggs or, you know—I think it would depend on where you were at too. But, really, from the time that he started out, in places that we were, there were crimes but the incidences where you're actually going to get shot or get hurt or be out—I think it came to me early on that potentially—no.
>
> High-speed chases everywhere and that kind of stuff [was her vision of what a police officer did]. When really, the reality is most of the times they're just taking a burglary report or sitting up in the office writing paperwork.

Another coping response proposed for dealing with the *Danger Aspect* was that of *Training Confidence* in the Member's ability to handle dangerous or high-risk situations. Some of the Member participants described themselves as being confident in their own ability, as well as the importance that they placed on never becoming "complacent".

> I was pretty careful. I was pretty cautious.
>
> And yet, when you're doing your duties, I always tried never to become complacent.

Similarly, some of the spousal participants voiced confidence in the ability of their Member spouse. A few of the participants described their mates as taking good care of

themselves physically, which the non-police spouses viewed as important for dealing with the dangerous aspects of the job.

> And [husband's name] really tries to stay in good shape, so I think that makes a huge difference. If I had some pot bellied husband sitting out there, I'd be a little more worried I think. I feel he handles himself really well. He can take care of himself. He isn't going to put himself in a situation where it's going to be compromising.
>
> You have to kind of realise, in my case, this is [wife's name] job too. And she's got to do the same job I do. And she does. There's no question in my mind. But you have to just respect it. Whatever the risks are, she'll deal with it in the safest way possible.
>
> Because, you know, he's very, very capable. I know that.

Maintaining a *Family Connection* was another aspect described by participants as a key strategy for dealing with the *Danger Aspect*. Similar to dealing with the stressors of shiftwork, many participants discussed the importance of staying in contact with their spouse during a shift, noting that they would often touch base on the telephone.

> I think because I told [wife's name] always what was going on, I told her where I was going. For the most part, I don't think she really was all that worried. She may have been, but I don't think she was. I remember when I was shot there, I phoned her up and told her I was in the hospital, "I'm OK. I've been shot." She thought I was joking. So, in her own world I don't think—she knew that bad things happen out there, but I don't think she ever, you never expect it to happen to me or to my partner.
>
> I tell her I'm going to be home at eight o'clock at night for supper and I don't get home till ten. Lots of times I'll just give her a quick call on the phone and tell her I'm not going to be home for a couple hours. I'll just say—maybe it's a domestic or something like that, or it's a B&E, just so she knows what's going on. There's probably not a shift that I don't call her and let her know if I'm not going to come home for supper or if things are busy, stuff like that. It might only be a 20 second phone call, but it's pretty quick. And that's one good thing about working in rural detachment—you can do that.

As outlined within the first theme, although rare, Members do become involved in "critical incidents" throughout the course of their careers, including shootings, accidents

involving multiple casualties, or particularly emotional calls (e.g., the death of a child). Critical Incident Stress Debriefings (CISDs) are sometimes employed by the Force to assist Members in dealing with the psychological ramifications of their experiences. In this regard, participants also suggested that non-police spouses should be involved, to some extent, in the debriefing process, as dangerous or traumatic situations inevitably affect the spouse as well.

> The Member's are often involved in debriefings and things like that and it might be a good idea for there to be was a modified version of a debriefing for families or spouses.
>
> I think they [spouses] should [be involved in debriefings]—it's kind of hard for me to say. At the time when we had incidents happening, there was nothing like that. [Husband's name] has been involved in things where he's put a debriefing on. I'm always in support of what he's doing, as far as the debriefings. I've never been in them, but I'm always thinking, "Yes, you should." And he's always been very aware when there's been something that happened, that it involves more than just the policeman. It involves the whole—it's their wife, it's their kids, it's their mother, father.
>
> Oh, most definitely. When you're talking about the critical incidents. Oh most definitely, I think so [spouses should be involved in debriefings]. I'm just thinking about a friend of ours who was involved with the [event]. He has major things about that and what happened. He reflects every now and then, he dreams about it. And, I really don't know if his wife was involved in debriefing afterwards. But I **definitely, definitely** believe that definitely should be an issue after the fact. Because, you're dealing with this as a couple. It's not separate. He's an RCMP Member, you have to be debriefed afterwards, you have to have stress management. It's a team. It's a team thing. He brings it all home.

Finally, a number of participants referred to attempting to have *No Worries* as a coping mechanism when dealing with the dangerous aspects of the job. Participants discussed simply not worrying, as it was very energy consuming and not an effective way to cope.

> Yeah. And that trust thing and the worry. It's not going to do you any good to worry.
>
> But, I don't think we really dwelled on the dangerousness.
>
> Yeah, yes. That's right. I don't I think ever fretted over it.

Along the same line, others discussed the role that spirituality played for them in coping with the worries related to the job. Some expressed that they found religious faith very helpful.

> And then definitely being a Christian really helps too because then you try to just hand it over to the Lord and not worry about it as much.

3.3.3 Super-Construct: Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First

Within the super-construct *Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First* (see Figure 8), strategies and insights emerged for dealing with some of the aspects of the job that participants identified as having affected their lives. Participants discussed strategies that they found necessary when dealing with the inevitable work-home connections (*Work-Home: Connected and Open*). Within the construct, participants noted that *A Balanced Self* was necessary in dealing with aspects related to *Earning Half the Badge*. And finally, with respect to social life, *Getting Outside* of the Force was strongly suggested (see Table 8). Overall, participants explained that putting the family first was an essential underlying factor in the maintenance of their marriage.

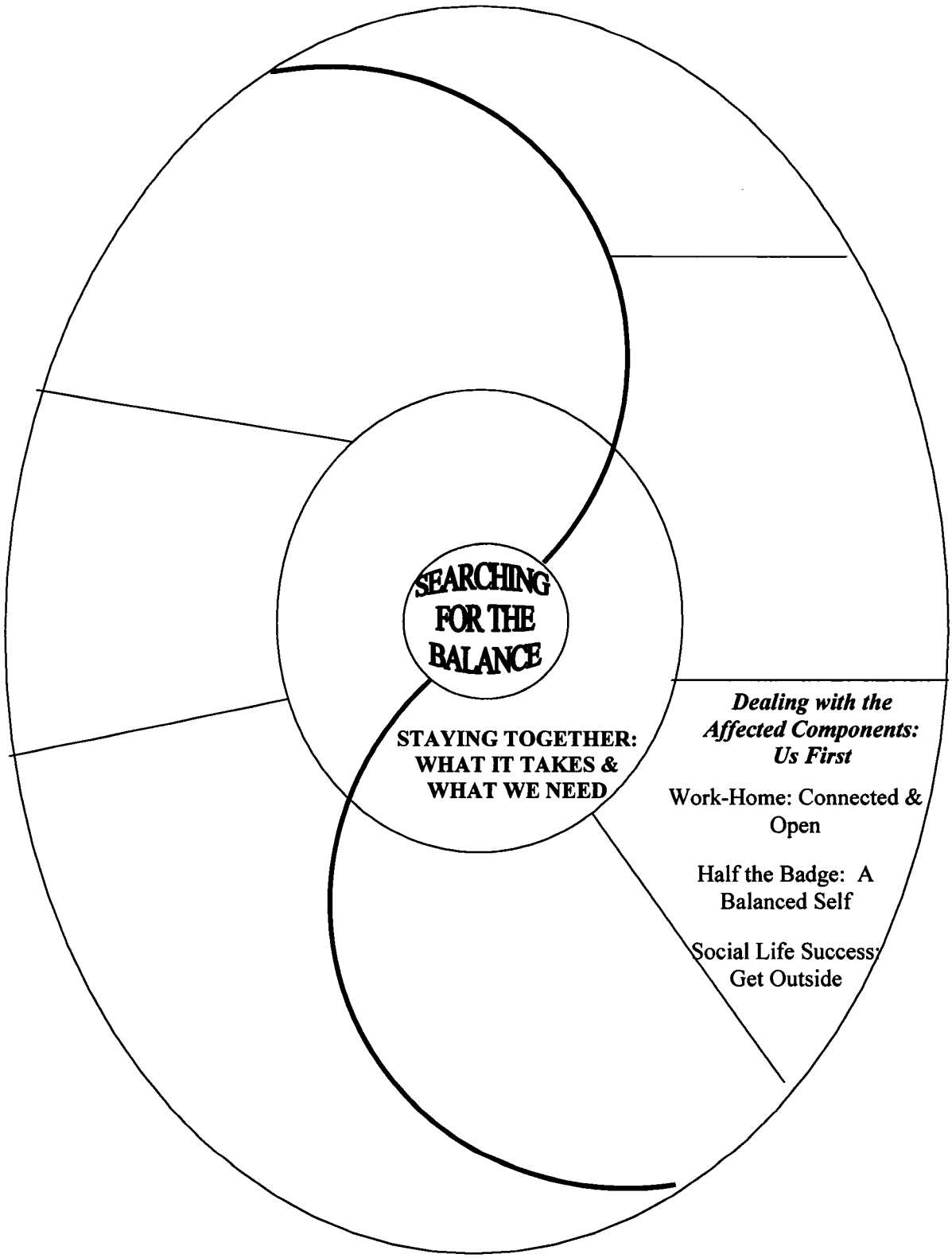

Figure 8. Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First

Table 8

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First	Work-Home: Connected and Open	Family First
		Communication Critical
		Confidentiality: Emotion Versus Logistics
		Sharing Similar Work Sometimes Helpful
	Half the Badge: A Balanced Self	Maintaining a Sense of Self
		Flexibility
		Create Balance
		Spousal Career
	Social Life Success: Get Outside	Essential Outside of Force Integration
		Dealing with the Questions

3.3.3.1 Construct: Work-Home: Connected and Open

Participants identified the *Inevitable Work-Home Connection* within the first theme, outlining that police work is a job that undeniably affects family life. Within the RCMP and many other police forces, this unquestionable spillover sometimes impinged on privacy and safety issues. This close connection to work, coupled with the demanding nature of the job, resulted in non-police spouses having to "compete", at times, with police work. In coping with this demanding nature and the idea that home life can quite often be consumed with work, participants suggested the necessity of a *Family First* philosophy. Again, as outlined within the first theme, participants understood that at times the job might have to take precedence over family activities; however, despite this, participants noted a critical feature in their relationships was that, as a family, they always knew or "felt" that they came first.

In [husband's name] case, he's really good about making us feel that we're more important than the Force. I think that the older version of the RCMP, kind of the "Force is first", even for [husband's name] and a lot of our friends, I think that's kind of going by the wayside a little bit. And yeah, even though he does have certain loyalties and has to go to [name of specific duty] and go to things and sometimes be away from us, I think he's really made an effort to make sure that we are first and he's working because he wants to have a full life and not necessarily just working for the Force. I know that there are other couples, that it definitely, it's the other way around. For some people I can see that their priorities and their focuses maybe aren't family oriented, they're more work oriented.

What would make a good cop husband? Make sure that your family knows that they're the most important thing in the world to you.

One of the things that's **really** important to me is that I put my family before anything else.

I've worked with people and I know people that don't do that [put their family first]. They put the job before. And, you probably know this, the RCMP has this wellness initiative that they talk about where they try to have people balance their family life and their work. Well, for me, it will always be my family life that will be important. I could lose my job or my career and move on to something else. I couldn't afford to lose my family, my wife and child and move on to something else, that's not something that interests me. So, if it meant leaving one behind, it would be an easy decision for me—I'd leave the career behind.

I love [wife's name] a lot. And you can tell by our wedding pictures there that I married [wife's name]. And I got a different view of a lot of things—but a lot of guys in the Force get married in Red Serge. That was not of interest to me at all. I'm marrying the woman that I love and I want to keep my work totally separate from that. You know, it's nice, the Red Serge, and [wife's name] said, "You know, at the house maybe you could wear your Red Serge so we could have some pictures of that as well", and that's fine, but I wanted to get married in a traditional tuxedo. Because, I was interested in the woman I love. I didn't want to take away from our wedding day by having.... You know, what if something ever happened with the RCMP, where I got fired or anything. All my wedding pictures would be in Red Serge and I wouldn't want to look at them ever [laughing]. You know, it's a different line of thought maybe. But for me, the focus was on my wife that day and nothing to do with my work, and that's why I was totally away from that. And I don't think I would do anything really different.

As previously outlined, communication has been identified as an essential component in long-term marriages (see Burleson et al., 2000; Gottman, 1998). Emerging within the context of the work-home connection, participants reiterated that in light of the often stressful nature of the job, at home, *Communication* was *Critical.* Participants discussed a number of insights that they discovered over the course of their respective marriages as helpful in terms of communication, including using their spouses as a "sounding board" regarding their thoughts and feelings. This appeared necessary for the couple to maintain a strong sense of how the other was feeling. This concept is in line with what researchers have referred to as the maintenance strategy of openness (Dindia, 1997; Meeks, Hendrick, & Hendrick, 1998; Prager, 2000; Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 2002).

> There was a few times when I knew he was going through some really tough things and I felt bad that I couldn't help him. But most of the time I would just listen to what he had to say. Pretty well.
>
> And she can sense, she knows too when I'm uptight and a little bit stressed out. She also noticed when I come home and I'll be in bed just grinding my teeth like crazy, sleeping. And she'd wake me up and try to get it off my chest. And I would and it would help out quite a bit.
>
> It's a situation where she knows me the better than anybody—more than my mom now because of that transition that I went through when I became a policeman.

In relation to this, both officers and spouses described the necessity for the Member's "willingness" to communicate. Researchers have generally found support to suggest that women are better than men at utilising relational maintenance strategies, including openness (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Ragsdale, 1996). Participants suggested that the Member spouse had to be open and willing to share their thoughts and feelings in terms of how the job was affecting them. Thus, given that the

majority of police officers in this study, and in general, tend to be men, this relational maintenance strategy may be particularly important within police marriages. Of further relevance is that police officers are trained to avoid displaying emotions, which has been identified as subsequently frustrating for police spouses (Brown & Grover, 1998; Lowenstein, 1999).

> There was an incident in [2nd posting] that really bothered me—I was the shift supervisor for the day, so the supervisor on the road, and a plane crashed. Just on arrival at [name of city] airport. And five people died—a family of four with young kids, about four and six years old, the pilot, and two parents. And the part that really bothered me was taking the young bodies out of the plane. That was a really, really dark thing. And at the same time smelling—aviation fuel has a distinct smell, so every time I smell aviation fuel now, I think of that scene. And it actually happened last week, I was on a plane from [name of place] and I could really smell the aviation gas and it takes us back to that. But in those instances, I **rely** on my partner there, I never shut her out because of the fact that it's important for me to verbalise how I feel. And especially now that I have a daughter, a young daughter. I'm glad that [daughter's name] came after, because I think it would have bothered me even more. But the way to cope with that situation is to talk about it and I would never shut [wife's name] out in a situation like that. Because that's what festers and then leads to problems in communication I think. So I told her that that really, **really** bothered me, I said "[wife's name], that was bad and it was something that I didn't really expect or, it was a different situation". And you know, it was really odd, because we had three plane crashes in a short time span in [2nd posting] and that was the first one and that one really bothered me. The second one was a lone male from [name of place]. You know, that was just doing my job, getting things done—**always** with respect toward the victim, but it didn't bother me as much as with the young kids. And I've been involved in a lot of situations where I think, "Oh, that's just really bad", but I talk about it.
>
> And I think back to the families that I have talked about, a lot of Members **do** share. And I think those are very effective marriages.
>
> Always, always keep them [the spouse] in the loop. Always make them your priority. Why are you getting married? Why are you doing this? Because you want to give yourself to that person and you want to be with that person for the rest of your life. So, you'll **stop** working one day. So, you still have to have that same person that you wanted to be with right from the beginning. When I decided to get married, I said this is the

> person that I want to be with. So, even in your vows, you say that you'll be with them for better or for worse. Well, if they don't know how you're feeling, or if you don't communicate to them how you feel that day or this day, how can they adjust and find out? I think you just have to really communicate with that person and really, that's the biggest thing I'd say to them—tell them what's going on. And at that family workshop, I said, you know, that's kind of the direction I was trying to push. You've got to keep that person in the loop, as to what you're doing. You know, there's some things that you can't say, but they're very few and far between.
>
> And I always had a certain amount of disrespect for the "old boys"—you know, the tough guys who don't cry, don't get upset about anything, don't talk to your wife about anything—I thought that that was just a bunch of bologna. Just never saw it [the tough-guy attitude from her husband]—**ever**.

Participants also suggested that sharing openly was imperative, as "secrets led to secrets". It was further surmised that withholding some information may result in a more encompassing lack of disclosure.

> I don't think there should be divisions in a marriage. I think if there are things that you keep separate or hidden or that aren't shared, then that causes places for breakdowns.
>
> And I think you're partner's wise enough to know if you're trying to hide something. And then if you hide one thing, what stops you from starting to hide other things.
>
> And I'm thinking—if you keep secrecies in terms of what you do at work, what about the other secrets. Where does it start and where does it end?

Despite the identified importance of communication, participants also balanced this by discussing the value of "space". Some explained that they understood their spouse's behaviour enough to know when to provide him or her with "space" and that many (both Members and spouses) coped by taking some time alone to process their respective days.

> Ask questions, but maybe, if you can tell that somebody needs their space, then give them their space. Don't push. That's what I would say. And [wife's name] doesn't push at all. She knows. It's not like, "No. Don't

> talk to me right now". It's like, "No [wife's name], I don't really want to talk right now".
>
> Over the years he's learned to adapt with that [coping with work stress] too. He'll come home and perhaps he'll go out and go for a run, and he'll come back and he's a lot more relaxed. In the past few years he's gotten into a little more of meditation, trying to release the stress that way. It's just ways of finding, of releasing stress besides, you know [snicker] attacking the family type of thing. Taking it out on the family. I mean, there's been those moments too, definitely, but you've got to be aware of what happened today. "OK, what's going on today? What did happen today? How come you are such a **bitch**?" [laughs]. You know, that kind of thing.
>
> More or less realising that when you come home from work, I find I'm that way [need time to unwind after work] too, I've got to just back off for just a few minutes and be by myself, just for a few minutes. Whether it be getting supper ready, or whatever the case may be.

Finally, one couple suggested the importance of "work talk time limits" as a specific coping strategy. They noted that although it was necessary to share and to "vent" about their respective days, it was also necessary to keep the focus of off-time from work on the family. They devised a "rule" in which they only talked about work for short periods of time.

> One of the things that we do a lot is we have our little venting periods. So, both of us, when we came home, we'd stop and take 15 minutes and just blurt everything out, and get if off our chest and then, OK, let's get on with the evening and switch topics and go from there. And that's been a big thing for us that's really worked.

Dealing with issues surrounding confidentiality was also discussed as an aspect of the work-home connection. In response to the issues regarding disclosing confidential information to the spouses raised within the first theme, many participants reiterated the importance of open communication and suggested that the best way to approach the confidential aspect was to assume that "nothing's confidential".

> I think it's had a very—for the most part, I think [wife's name] and I really communicate what is going on at work. So I've **never** kept any secrets from her and I know that, especially when I was younger—you don't say anything to anybody. Well, I never did that.
>
> My opinion on the conspiracy of silence thing—I work by myself, pretty much all the time. We work by ourselves a lot. So you need to have somebody to talk to, so you come home and talk about it. I think that conspiracy of silence thing is just something that they say so they can get out of telling their spouses that they don't want to talk to them about it at work. You follow me? I stumbled through that. Because really, I don't think I've ever told her anything that's ever jeopardised an investigation.
>
> And a lot of the [work-related] stuff that I did, because I was in the [name] section, it was always in the newspaper. So it was going to come out anyway that I was there. She knew that I got called out at three in the morning, so she knew something major was going on. I might as well tell her. That way, she can prepare herself for however she has to deal with that.

Further to this, two couples suggested that it was sometimes important to include the larger family circle, if there was something important occurring at work.

> And it's not only your wife, your whole family does [need to be aware of job requirements]. I even found out yesterday, I brought my mom and she watched me teach for the afternoon. And she said, "You never talk about that". Well, it's because I don't talk about my work, you know, really. And she said, "You never talk about it. I never know what you see". You know, I wouldn't bring her on a ride along with me because she'd be worried for me, you know, if I was working in an operational setting. But yesterday she was just enthralled by it. She wants to come back again next week. And you know, I never realised that with my mom. She says, "You never talk about your work", well, I don't want to talk about it when I'm at home. I talk to [wife's name] about it if there's anything bothering me or anything like that. But some of the stuff, it's mundane anyway [laughs].
>
> You know, I also shared things with her family, her parents, my parents. And it's all based upon the fact that if they disclose something, I'm screwed. In the meantime, it makes it easier for all of us to function—talk about what's going on. I was very open with all of the family, so they would just—it never became a big deal.

Importantly, however, Members in particular noted that they tended to share *Emotion Versus Logistics* when discussing the confidential aspects of their work,

particularly those situations that might have been disturbing. There was a sense that the important factor was to discuss how the aspects of the job might have affected them emotionally, and not necessarily the specifics of an investigation or a call. Some Members felt that there were certain situations in which "the integrity of the investigation" was important to uphold, while others commented that rarely, if ever was "the integrity of an investigation" an actual issue.

> See, for the most part, for 99% of the investigations that we get involved in, it really doesn't matter if the whole world knows anyway. Like it or not, that's what the deal is. Like, there's some things that you really have to be confidential about. But for the most part, it's not that big a deal. And I think back to my family, they really don't care about the details of anything. "When you went out to that MVA, was he impaired?" "Yep". They don't need to know what he blew and this and that. It's going to come out in the paper anyway. At least they know, and it was **never,** ever a big deal.
>
> It's hard [knowing what to share about the job with your spouse]. I mean, there's definitely things that you don't have to mention to keep the confidentiality. You can still say that you saw a dead body today and there's whatever involved and it's bothering you because it makes you think of this situation or it relates to a personal situation.
>
> Sometimes I want to know [what happened on a particular call]. But I guess it's the same in my situation. I work with disabled kids or sometimes dysfunctional families and you know that there's a code of professionalism and confidentiality where you're supposed tell some things and not tell some things. And I don't want to know some things. He doesn't want to tell me some things. Which is fine. But he's never going to keep a secret that would harm our relationship, or vice versa.

In approaching confidential situations by expressing the emotional aspect and not necessarily the specific details of incidents, participants suggested that spouses did not have to be subjected to some of the horrific experiences. Further, both spouses and Members suggested that the spouses also did not have to worry about saying something they were not supposed to if they were not provided with specific details.

> [Were on-the-job experiences shared?] Yes and no. He didn't do specifics, because I get grossed out easily. If it's too ugly, then I don't sleep either [laughing].
>
> I suppose there's lots of things that he didn't tell me, because it was confidential. But sometimes it's better that I don't know. **Not** because it's anything that's bad or anything, it's just that, you know, you're talking to your friends and, "Did you know that so and so"—and oops—"I wasn't supposed to say that". And so there's some times when there's been things going on and I said to him, you know, "I don't need to know about that." Better if I don't know about it, then that way I can't get into any problems. I can't slip, I can't make a mistake. But if it was something that was affecting him personally, or was bothering him personally, then I would listen to that. But if it was just gossip—like oh, "The neighbour shot his wife". But I happen to know that there was something going on there, I'm privy to certain information, he may not tell me or I may say, "I don't need to know, let's not talk about that." But if it was something that was really affecting him or that he was having trouble with then he would steer around that.
>
> Well, for example, if they bring it home that one of the business people downtown is, oh, I don't know, done something that really was not helpful to the police—I know sometimes when I would go downtown then it would be, if I didn't know about that, sometimes you're party to information that you almost wish you didn't have because, if you don't act just as friendly to that person as someone else, people are going to say, "Well, he tells his wife everything".

There were a number of non-Member spousal participants who were in professions in which confidentiality was also very important (e.g., nursing or mental health). Other non-police spouses worked for the RCMP in civilian roles. Some of these participants suggested that in terms of dealing with the work-home spillover, they found *Sharing Similar Work Sometimes Helpful*. Member participants suggested that having a spouse who was on the "inside" provided an ease with which to communicate information at times because there was that "insider trust and understanding".

> For me, I'm lucky because I work with the RCMP as well, so it's a little bit different in my case because I kind of know some of the people that he would know and I usually have ended up working, not by choice but

> because of availability and experience, that I usually end up working with the RCMP too.
>
> But with [wife's name] being privy to this kind of thing from another side of it [as a civilian Member], I don't have any problems talking to her about it. So it really helps. That's a big thing for us.
>
> I think, because of the jobs we had [nurse and police officer], we both understood that this is for your ears only sort of thing. It doesn't get discussed beyond this. I think we both respected that.
>
> But, I think one of the big things for us is that there's a lot of understanding because when [wife's name] and I met, she was a police dispatcher. So, she worked the same shifts that I did at certain points—so there's a lot of understanding there.

3.3.3.2 Construct: Half the Badge: A Balanced Self

Participants discussed the difficulties and sacrifices that spouses of RCMP officers sometimes face, which emerged within the first theme as *Earning Half the Badge*. Spouses in this study discussed a number of strategies that they employed to help deal with specific stresses as a result of being married to a Member of the RCMP. For example, in response to *Getting Lost in the Shuffle*, as outlined in the first theme, participants noted the importance of *Maintaining a Sense of Self.* In other words, being independent from their Member spouse was identified as critical. Many spouses outlined having to take on family responsibilities on their own, often because their partner was working shiftwork or on call; thus, having a sense of independence appeared to serve them well.

> If you're not so dependent on what your husband is doing at certain times, for him to go with you. I've found I've become much more independent in my thinking and as far as thinking, "Oh, I can't have my husband to go with me to a certain point". I don't depend on him as much anymore. He can't come home and fix something at the house or do something [because of shiftwork demands], so I just kind of became—there's a CBC show that was on—Mary Bellow and she's a Ms. Fixit around the house, so I'm more or less a Ms. Fixit around the house too. So, I just adapted that way.

> Like except, for the exception of the last year, we've never been together. Not really—except to have kids. Like really. When I had my third child, he was in court. I phoned him and he was in court, you know. It's always been. I'm sounding like a hero, but I'm just telling you where it's at.
>
> That's where it's good to be involved in the community, wherever you go, because you're not just tied into, you know, "my husband is away from here so I have to stay home and twiddle my thumbs". You have to get involved in the community and community affairs.
>
> I don't know if she [wife] is that independent, but she had to be independent.

Along the same line, some spouses discussed the importance of forging their own identity, as they sometimes found that they too easily became known as "the cop's wife".

> The one thing I would say is, you, or women—spouses of Members—you have to have an identity of your own. You can't just be "the cop's wife". I just, I don't know, maybe that's narrow, but I really believe that you survive much better if you have your own identity. Because it's really easy—everywhere you go you're the sergeant's wife or the corporal's wife. So, feeling like you have some sense of control in your life and sense of identity that's outside this entity that's always hanging there. I think that makes you a much happier person.
>
> I think I would have rebelled at it somewhat [being seen only as a cop's wife]. Because, I never wanted to be the policeman's wife. I didn't want to be just the woman who was married to policeman. I didn't have a career, so I went with him where he had to go, but I never wanted to be that. We had a group in [name of city] called the Stetsonettes. It was kind of fun. A group of wives get together and we'd have speakers and stuff like that. And then, the next place I went to, and I can't even remember the timing of that, and they had the same thing. I said, you know, I don't want that to be the only thing I do in life. I'm married to a policeman, my friends are policemen's wives. My women's group that I go to are a bunch of policeman's wives. I can't. I don't want to be just the person that's married to the police. I just want to be me. And if I'm married to him, then he goes to work and he's a policeman. I don't want that to be my whole circle of identity.

In another respect, the importance of having *Flexibility* in the face of diversity and being open to new experiences was also highlighted as an important coping strategy for

spouses. Many non-police spouses discussed the potential downfall of becoming too rigid, as being able to adapt to new and diverse situations was important.

> [Reflecting on what she would say to future police spouses.] Oh my goodness. Well, remain open to different things that may come along in your marriage because of your husband's, because of your spouse's career. So, it means you may be moving when it's not your choice, or your job may be changed when it's not your choice. I guess I would suggest that you just stay open about it.
>
> I think just, in terms of the new spouse—be prepared for anything. And never say never [laughs]. Because I never thought I'd be here in [name of current posting].
>
> No, [wife's name] has been fantastic in the whole deal [dealing with the challenges of the job]. But I think what helps of course, in the success of our marriage, is her flexibility. Her flexibility really helps because she says, "Yes, I'll do that. I won't do that, but I'll do that". And that's when you know that you have a good partner, is that you talk and say, "Well, that will be good for me".

Another construct that emerged in terms of strategies for dealing with the specific demands on the spouse was the necessity, at times, to *Create Balance* within their families. Spouses identified their role as sometimes having to "demand" or remind their Member spouse about the importance of balancing the roles between work and home.

> About allowing that [police work] to be the most important thing in his life. Always, always demanding that he turns his attention home.
>
> That you make time to come home, spend time with your kids. I think some wives tend to allow that [police work] to become the most important thing.
>
> He would go gung-ho overboard [with work] and I would always, you know, reel him in and say, "You know, you've got to give yourself a break here and you can't be on call 24 hours/day".

Spouses also described the importance of being "vocal" within their marital relationship. Many noted that their own life paths often depended on the moves of their Member-spouse's career. One spouse, in reflecting on the six transfers that she had been

involved in with her husband, noted that she would have been even "more vocal" in expressing the importance of her needs in the moves earlier on.

> Be very vocal [with your spouse] [laughs]. Be very, very vocal about what you need because the job is not a job, it's a lifestyle. Because, it affects where you live, it affects who your friends are.
>
> And just to—you have to speak up about what it is that you need because if you just kind of go along with the flow—I've seen women who have done that, and lo and behold, they're getting divorced. And you know when you meet those people you think, "Oh no, there's problems here", and it's not surprising when you hear that they are split up.
>
> I would be even more vocal, earlier on.

Above all, some spouses articulated the importance of keeping the job in perspective and keeping themselves grounded. Many spouses reflected that although the RCMP took up a large part of their lives, it was important to remember that it was "just a job".

> And I think, because I'm pretty easy going—I just laugh. You know, they're just regular people [RCMP brass]. Really, they have no rule over me. I just didn't take it seriously. And I still don't. I mean, I'm happy you advanced and that you got high up in the RCMP—good for you, but that really has nothing to do with me. It's still the same thing—always was. Shaking the Commissioner's hand is no different to me than shaking the principal at our local schools hand. I'm glad you've done well, other than that you're just a regular person.
>
> Then you come back to [name of current post] and you're at Headquarters, well [husband's name] was polishing and—it was a lot different [laughing]. And he was, "Oh no you can't say that", or "No you can't do that". And I would just laugh because I thought, "What are they going to do? Fire me?" [laughing]. They can't do a thing about me. I think that helped cope with it.

Finally, as noted earlier, one of the often-mentioned sacrifices made by RCMP spouses was the fact that they had to give up their *Spousal Career* during a transfer. In dealing with that reality, spouses identified the importance of career versatility.

> I don't think I ever felt as though I resented [husband's name] because of it [having to give up her jobs], it wasn't like that. Something I think of now, as much as, I don't recall being that concerned about it at the time, but I was a person that—there's so many different kinds of jobs that nurses can have that I was quite willing to try any job that came along. I might be working in labour and delivery in one place I was in and then I might be working in public health in another place I was in. You know, if that's where the job was, that's where I'd work.
>
> Well, when we moved here I got pregnant with [daughter's name] and I didn't work until [son's name] went to grade one. And then I just substitute taught here and in [name of another town]. So it was pretty flexible.
>
> I guess we were fortunate, in that when we were getting transferred, a nurse could always get work. It hasn't been like that for the last 10 years.

Others suggested that finding a career in which the spouses were content contributed significantly to the overall health of their marriage.

> And she enjoyed her work. So it probably helped the cause.
>
> I think [wife's name] was always career orientated. I don't think she ever found work was a chore to go to.

3.3.3.3 Construct: Social Life Success: Get Outside

The RCMP undeniably has an effect on the social lives of its Members and their families, as participants outlined within *Social Life Shift*. As many participants discussed earlier, there was a tendency for Members, especially early in their career to *Stick to the Inside*, as it afforded a certain level of comfort and trust. In terms of providing a healthy environment for RCMP families, however, Members and spouses suggested that *Essential Outside of Force Integration* was necessary when dealing with the effects of the job on their social life. Some participants did note that this outside integration is a process and that generally Members tend to go through an 'inside out evolution', in

which initially they spent time with Members of the Force, but then eventually came to realise the importance of breaking away from the constancy of the RCMP environment.

> Before [early in his career], you really wanted to keep everything of the police aspects separate, but mostly because we hung out with police friends anyway, so we were really immersed in the police culture in [1st posting], but less so in [2nd posting], so we kind of had to relax that a little bit and not be as paranoid.

> You know, I tend to think when you first start out in the RCMP I think you do that: You tend to stick with people in the Force because those are your mentors. Those are the people who are guiding you along, teaching you how to do the job. You still want to learn the job and you hear the stories, and you all get fascinated by, "Oh, what did you do? Where have you been?" The RCMP provides you with such—coast to coast, north and south. You can go anywhere in the country and police. So a lot of senior Members have a lot interesting stories about places they've been. So as a junior Member just getting in, you're going, "wow, this is kind of interesting stuff". So you tend to hang around with them. Not all junior Members do that because some come in with the attitude that, "I don't need to hang around with you" or are very stand-offish or whatever. Or, we get a lot of Members now who are very mature. They have a lot of life experience outside of the RCMP and come in and say, "Yeah, I love the job, thanks. Great. I love hanging around with you at the office, but I'm going home to spend time with my family". And that's good. But I think as you get on in tenure with the RCMP, you tend to go, "What's wrong with me hanging out with a bunch of people outside of the RCMP". I think it's a healthy thing.

Many participants focused on the numerous benefits that came with "integrating" into the communities in which they lived, including having some semblance of the "real world" (i.e., being reminded that the vast majority of people are honest, law abiding citizens). Spouses also discussed the importance of having outside resources and that it was refreshing to be able to discuss issues amongst their friends that were not always related to police work.

> But it was so refreshing that we'd talk about different things. We'd talk about squash, or we'd talk about their jobs, or we'd talk about funny stories.

> Absolutely [having friends outside of the Force is important]. It gets you away from the work. It helps lower your stress. We get skewed too in the Outfit. I think you tend to become negative on life. When you talk about RCMP couples—I think us both being Members, you can become more skewed, more negative on life, society, a little quicker, if you're not able to recognise that's not the way the world really is. Our job gravitates us towards the people who are having problems. We get called to those 10% of the people who represent 90% of the problems. So we go deal with those problems. So you can become skewed in your way of looking at things. But we all have the ability to step back and say, that's not the way the world works. Most of us are good people. Most of us inherently are good people. And having friends outside the Outfit has the added benefit because you get to hang out with them and you realise, "oh, they're not wife beaters or they're not dope dealers or child abusers or sexual abusers or what have you". The list goes on. And then you start to unwind and you go, "OK, I can relax a little bit. Not everybody's the perverts in society".

> One thing that I shared with the group [of cadets and their families during graduation at Depot] that I talked to was for both the Member and the spouse to really try and integrate with the community that you're into. Because it's so easy to get sucked into the police culture, and subculture, and then you're just hanging out with police friends and their families. We really experienced that when we were in [2nd posting]. It was a very close knit community and we really integrated and did a lot of different activities and we just found that our time there was **so** much more enjoyable than say living in the city.

Participants also identified occasions within social situations in which they would be asked about specific police-related incidents that were captured by the media. Spouses and Members suggested strategies that they found helpful in *Dealing with the Questions*, including repeating what they heard broadcast in the news.

> And sometimes when we really run into that [being questioned about an incident] was when we'd have conversations with our friends and they'd try and pump information out of you. So all we would really do is just repeat what we heard back in the media. And that was our way of kind of coping with that—dealing with questions when people want to know details. But, we were both really good at doing that, because we were both working directly with the files, and we know what's been released. And you kind of repeat back what they tell you. People don't really realise you're doing it. So, that was one of the ways we coped with people

> questioning or trying to find out more. They think that they're your buddies, so you're going to tell them something.

Others suggested the value of choosing friends wisely and that it was important to know whom they could trust.

> Sometimes it is [important to be careful of the friends you choose], but I think the biggest thing—[husband's name] and I are very social people. So when we came here, we met a whole bunch of people. And then you kind of find out which ones are trust worthy and which ones are going to put you in difficult situations and which one's aren't. And then you pick out and then you end up with this nice group of people that aren't going to put you in that situation where they're like, "Oh, I heard [husband's name] gave somebody a zero-eight. Well who was it? What were they doing?" We don't have friends who would put us in that situation and ask us that. And that's really nice. Or they're totally accepting if you were to say, "Yeah, he was at an accident last night, but I'm not able to reveal any of the information" and they'd say, "Yeah, no problem". They wouldn't be insulted by it.

> The friendship that is comfortable enough that I can explain to her why [answers to questions about a specific case cannot be provided], not just keep saying "no" and then feel like I'm going to lose my friendship, which is difficult too. So there are things like that. You don't want to be in that situation.

3.3.4 Super-Construct: The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward

The final super-construct (see Figure 9) within this second theme is representative of how the Force might better assist families of police officers and ultimately police officers themselves. As participants outlined within the first theme, there are a number of resources that the Force provides that have been identified as very helpful. Here, participants suggested ways in which the Force could *Continue with the Momentum*. As well, a number of constructs emerged in which participants made suggestions for the Force to *Move Forward*. Essentially, participants suggested that there needs to be an increased focus on family support (see Table 9).

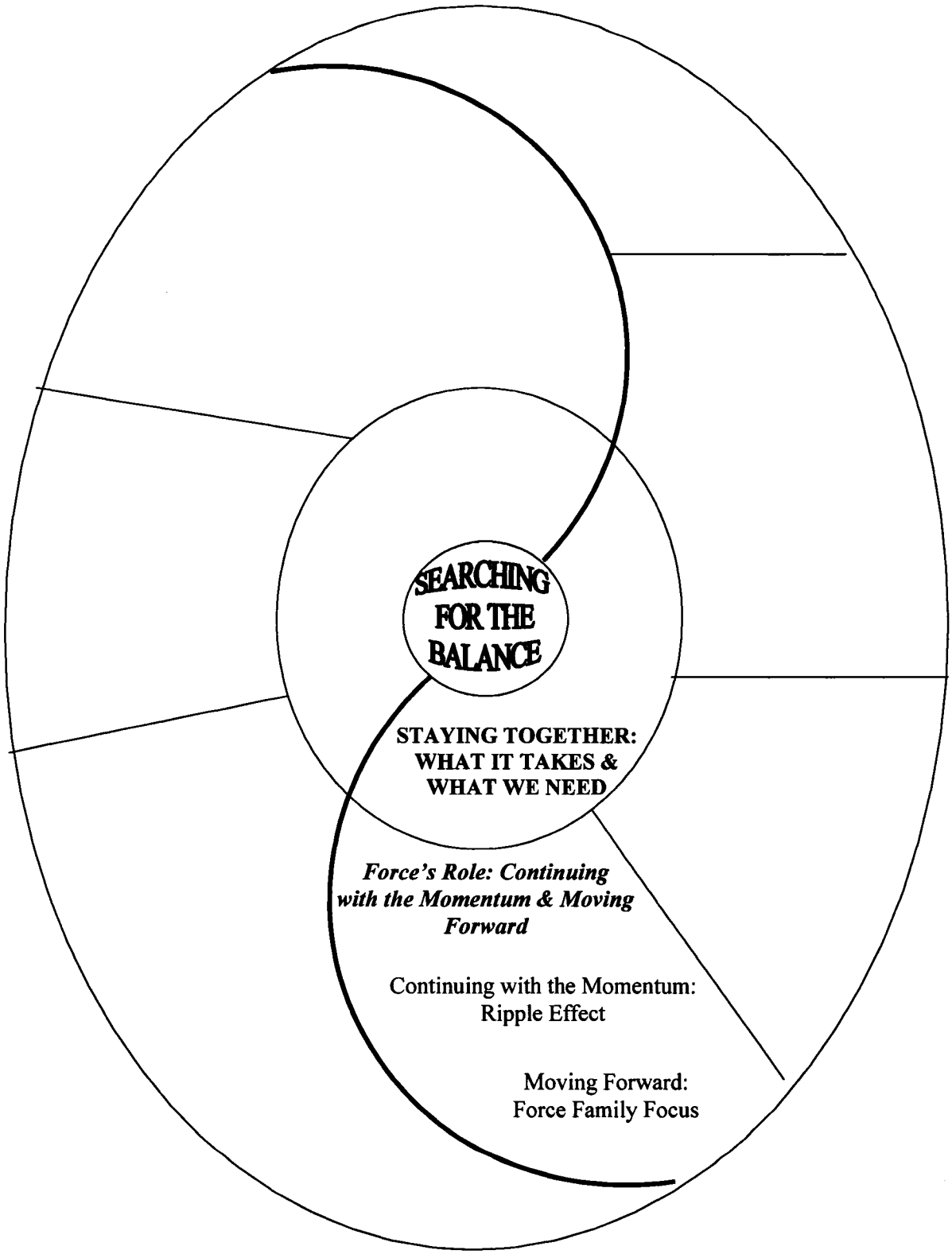

Figure 9. The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum & Moving Forward

Table 9

The Sub-Constructs and Constructs of "The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward"

Super-Constructs	Constructs	Sub-Constructs
The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward	Continuing with the Momentum: Member Support Ripples	"Worth the Investment" Understanding
	Moving Forward: Force Family Focus	The "RCMP Family" Focus and Recognition
		Staffing Vigilance
		Balanced Leadership

3.3.4.1 Construct: Continuing with the Momentum: Member Support Ripples

As discussed within the first theme, participants noted that the Force does provide a number of resources for its Members. Emerging within this construct was the idea that not only is support from the Force necessary for Members and their families, but that it is most definitely *Worth the Investment.* Participants discussed the importance for the Force investing in their Members and their families, because ultimately, Members who are healthier and happier will likely be more productive and supportive of their employer. In fact, all participants agreed that the Force should pursue their "wellness initiative" with a continued effort to support Members in creating a healthy balance between work and home. It appears as though there is a bi-directional relationship between work-home and home-work spillover. Clearly, from the perspective of these participants, aspects of RCMP work have an impact on the family. Consequently, Force support for the families when the job becomes particularly demanding, may directly influence Member performance on the job.

> I think Members with well-functioning families are productive Members. If there's problems at home they're going to take it to work. They carry a

> gun [laughing]—you know? You got to have your wits about you, you got to be in the job.
>
> If we're going to invest in that Member, male or female, as to be a good Member, you have to take what they bring with them [i.e., the family]. And we do talk that family comes first, so we need to invest in the family to make sure that they are looked after. So I don't disagree with that. Why wouldn't we make sure that they're aware of what the RCMP can offer for support. And not as the operating Member, as the spouse of a Member. Why wouldn't we make that aware to them? That makes sense that they should be supported as well.
>
> Yeah, if you haven't got a healthy worker, you know he's not going to give you an honest day's work.
>
> Personally, I think they're **way** more productive [when Members have a healthy home life]. And I think they give a better quality of service to the people that they serve. If you're happy at home, if you have a good relationship with your partner, be male or female. If you're happy at home, you bring that to work with you. At the same time your work—you take it home too. So, it only makes sense to me that if you have a strong family relationship, you have a strong, productive employee.
>
> Because obviously, if they're not functioning at home, it's going to spill over into work.
>
> Because if they fall apart in the relationship, that will have a direct bearing on how that Member is performing at work. Absolutely.

3.3.4.2 Construct: Moving Forward: Force Family Focus

Despite the fact that some participants agreed that the Force was supportive of the Member in many ways, the need for the Force to *Move Forward* with more of a *Family Focus* emerged as particularly important. In light of all the identified ways in which the Force both shapes and has an impact on families of RCMP officers, as outlined in the first theme, many participants felt that it was important for the organisation to be more vigilant of spouses and children of Members. The first construct that emerged related to *The 'RCMP Family' Focus and Recognition.* Specifically, participants outlined that the Force considers its Members and their spouses as part of a larger "family". Participants

suggested, however, that it was time that the Force shifted its focus in line with this ideal and worked harder at "honouring the family".

> See, one of the things that I—and this could be judgmental on my part too because I do get surprised sometimes—but a lot of people aren't all that comfortable with discussing these things openly [family relationships]. Now, we need to get the white shirts [Commissioned Officers], we need to get the senior NCOs, we need to get all the Members talking about relationships. We don't talk about relationships. So, if we ever hope to have an impact, we have to normalise the fact of talking about the significance of family. Instead of talking about the big drug bust, we can talk about—"By the sweet grace of goodness, I had the biggest, best birthday party"—and make that our normal daily conversation. But we don't honour our families. There's nothing that we do to honour them.
>
> I think that if the Force made an effort to really make the spouses feel like they are part of the RCMP family—because they **are so much** a part of it. They're part of the subculture, they're moved around with everybody, they're affected by it. It would be good if there was more of a family or spouse focus.

Participants also suggested that although there were some resources in place for Members, there was little in the way of spousal supports. Spouses, in particular, suggested that resources specific to their needs would have been very helpful, especially early in their partner's careers when they had "no idea what to expect". Some suggested that a handbook of information might have been helpful, as well as a resource person to contact.

> Yes. Someone you can talk to [about how to deal with the initial challenges during the first posting].
>
> Talking about help for spouses as far as counselling, especially in my earlier transition years. That would have definitely been most helpful. Again, it was "taboo" at that time, you were the strong backboned Mountie, and therefore the spouse kind of thought, well I can't go outside that little circle also. But definitely, a programme for spouses. I think that would be a definite positive point as far as that's concerned.
>
> Well, I think that there probably could be someone, a liaison person that could be just for spouses. Even questions like about medical and dental.

> Because the RCMP Members are covered under the federal health, they don't have a [provincial] health card and things like that. And even about the dental plan, it's all very conspicuous. So if there was an information point that any family member could—because you know a lot of times, even in any marriage, the husband knows something, but they don't necessarily share it, or they can't remember, or whatever. So, some kind of an info line where they get ask questions, or get information about different procedures. There's a lot of things—there's the transfer things, there's the specific health care type things, there's....

Similarly, participants suggested that information sessions and workshops, perhaps beginning during training at Depot, may be a very helpful initiative to assist families in understanding the nature of police work and subsequently arm them with strategies for dealing with some of the inherent stressors. Many participants suggested that it would be necessary to receive this information from those who had "recently been there", as those with greater years of service reiterated that the Force had changed considerably since their careers began.

> **Or** [providing workshops] for the **perspective** spouses of Members, or the people that are maybe waiting for their partners to go though training. I'm sure that they have lots of questions. Because, like you say, that information session [a one-hour session that is currently provided at cadet graduations] isn't necessarily an information session. A lot of times a lot of things are missed. And I know that people had questions. Even after I spoke [at one information session at a cadet graduation], I could see people wanted to ask questions, but they didn't give me a whole lot of time to talk so, and it was at the end of a long day for them too so I didn't want to keep people there. But I think that it's—even there [at Depot] they should have more of a family workshop—would be better than a family information session. Break it up into smaller groups so people can ask questions. Because I'm sure people have questions. But, in front of a large group or in front of their spouse they maybe don't want to ask questions. And maybe make it something that's just for families instead of the spouse. Because they kind of combine it as you watch their video [a video cadets compile of their training experiences that is shown to the family during this session]—well they've already done all that. They've seen the drill shows and seen the badge presentations.... But I think that if it's really going to be a family information session, it should be something specifically for the families that they can get out of it.

> Well, I think it would be helpful if you could have workshops for families. That might be helpful. You know, dealing with spousal stress, and what are the realities of moving around, and what are some of the things that you're going to come up against that you wouldn't if your spouse wasn't in this job. You know, like living in a small town. Sometimes you are a little isolated, and those kind of things. I don't know if they could do family workshops like that, or even workshops for spouses. So that they know, they have a better idea before they start.
>
> And have somebody that's been through the different moves. They can ask people that have been through it. Because there's the human questions, not just the, "OK, well what happens here and what form do I fill out there" and that's what I found people were more interested in when I was talking [to cadets and their families during a Depot graduation information session]. I think they were more interested in the, "Well, how many times, and where did you go, and did you have any say, and how did you feel"? And those are the kinds of things that they really wanted to know more—the family part of it.
>
> And so, as I say, I think the idea is really good [providing workshops for spouses given by other spouses of veteran officers], but I think you need a time frame [on the presenting spouses' years of service]. Don't draw on anybody back in the "old days" where, "Well, you girls don't know what the hell is going on now, because in my day I had to arrest them." That's not what it's all about.

With respect to emotional support for Members and their families, although some participants suggested that there was a better acceptance of the role for mental health services, many still felt that there needed to be greater promotion and accessibility to resources such as counselling and support. Spouses, in particular, discussed the notion that seeking counselling was still very much a sign of "weakness" among Members. Some suggested that more efforts were needed to debunk this stigma, for the good of the Members and their families. The challenges of providing psychological support for male police officers in particular has been recently reviewed in the literature and strategies for addressing specific challenges have been discussed (see Wester & Lyubelski, 2005).

> I almost think—I don't know if this is the answer and I don't know how you would go about this, but making [psychological] services more

> accessible. Because there is a real stigma. Like right now, do they have counselling services that are available and are accessible?
>
> Because, I should ask [husband's name]—but there's still the stigma, "Oh somebody's going to find out". [Administration needs to say] "We want you guys to have healthy families. This work is stressful, this job is stressful. How can we help RCMP families be healthy so that we have good, productive Members?"

Emerging as another sub-construct was the concept of *Staffing Vigilance* with respect to the specific needs of individual Members and their families. Participants acknowledged that it would be difficult for Staffing to track the careers of every Member; however, they suggested that more consideration of the specific needs of individual Members and their family circumstances may substantially affect the health and subsequent productivity of Members.

> I think that, I get very frustrated when they try to take a broad approach to an individual problem, and I don't think they can be that way. Personally, I would like them to be individualised in their approach in how they deal with things [Member's specific concerns]. An example—we had a Member who left the Force because her husband got transferred to a different job, he was a golf pro, and so he got another job in a different community. So she had no option but to quit. And now she's in another community where we could use her help. And they're probably going to transfer her to another place where she has to commute 40-50 minutes, something like that. And I get **so** frustrated with that.
>
> But we've had friends who've come—our friends in [name of province], there was another Member in his troop who wanted to go to [name of province] and he got [name of posting in province Member wanted to go to]. And they would have loved to have gone to [name of posting]. Why do they do that, it makes me wonder. Another thing that happened with them is that he went for a Staffing interview and the guy who was speaking on behalf of our friend came out and said, after the interview he was speaking with [friend's name] afterwards, and said, "Well I had no idea you had a wife and kid". He said, "I had no idea you were married". And [friend's name] said, "yeah, and I have a 1 ½ year old daughter". And they said, "Oh, I'm really sorry man". And he just walked away. I don't understand how they could do all this. And it still shows even more mistakes because when they came out to move them, the movers were acting really strange. So his wife asked, "What's wrong"? And they said,

> "Well, we were told we were coming to a single guy's house who lived with his parents and there'd be only 500 pounds worth of stuff". So even at the point, at the moving, at the last step, they still had no idea he had a wife and daughter and a house full of his own stuff.

Although many participants indicated that they understood they could be posted anywhere in Canada, many talked about the benefits for those who were posted close to "where they came from". Participants suggested that the Force is more vigilant of this now than before, but perhaps even more of a focus on this aspect may be warranted.

> I think that's a big thing [being posted near family]. We've had a lot of friends go through Depot and get placed in positions, places that are completely different than where they came from. That option makes me wonder, why does the Force do that? We have friends that grew up the same place as [husband's name] and then they're in [name of province], and they really wanted to get back to [name of home province]. And her family isn't well, so now she's there, she's miserable. She's home for six weeks right now at her mom and dad's. Meanwhile her husband's up there by himself—that's got to be difficult. She doesn't want to be there. They should think more about that and it would keep families a lot happier, that way.

> And I always found it interesting, because some of the Mountie's wives are from New Brunswick or BC or wherever and get moved to a place like [name of small reserve], it's a big, big change, for anybody. And it certainly is for somebody that hasn't been used to the prairies too.

A more specific staffing-related suggestion was the prospect of having time to settle in after a transfer. Some participants discussed having to deal very quickly with buying and selling a home and settling into a new community, while their Member spouse was expected to be at work. Provision of time to get their home life in order was seen as beneficial by many participants.

> You know, even when you first moved if they have some flexibility in the schedules because if you arrive in a new town and right away go into nights you really—it is difficult. But, with shiftwork, it comes with the job and sometimes it's difficult.

> So to have some time to settle in [after a transfer]—I think would have made it a lot easier on me. But, we have gotten that at different places – we got two weeks when we moved here.

Finally, *Balanced Leadership* was identified by many participants as a necessary step by the Force to demonstrate an investment in the health of their Members. Some suggested that the Force, as an organisation, needs to begin to "walk the talk". Essentially participants noted that those in leadership roles needed to have more balanced expectations about what they required from Members.

> As a whole, I spoke earlier about the wellness initiative. And I would like to see more action than talk on that facet, because, they're trying to bring—and I don't have a full understanding of it—but they're [the Force] trying to bring that balance. And I would **really** like to see that.
>
> And I think we're in a struggle right now where that fine balance is because we do preach the talk. The talk is, family comes first. And I think that talk has always been there. But I don't believe that [that family does in fact come first in the Force].

A specific suggestion, endorsed by many of the Member participants, was the necessity of a "balanced supervisor". Many talked about how their experiences with respect to having a balanced work-home life differed, depending on their direct supervisor, and whether the supervisors supported this balance. In line with findings by previous researchers, a supportive supervisor has been identified as an important factor in off-setting negative work-home spillover (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Hammer et al., 2005). Both spouses and Members viewed the role of the direct supervisor as critical to their ability to be better balanced.

> But when it comes to how it [the work-home balance] involves me personally, I think it's reflected by the direct supervisor.
>
> I think a lot of it still comes back to your supervisor. If your child is sick or something like that. Just knowing that you could go to your supervisor

> and saying, "I have to take the day off". Some of them are more difficult to deal with that way, some of them are a lot easier.
>
> You know, if something happened in my family, I'd want my boss to do this. So, it's reflected in their performance and how they treat you. But if you have somebody who has a different management style, and they put the operation of the unit first, then you may not get that support. So, I don't think you can really say, for me personally right now in a general setting, how it is that the RCMP is supporting you. I would say "great", because of my direct line supervisor.

3.3.5 Summary and Implications of Staying Together: What it Takes and What We Need

Four super-constructs comprise the second main theme, including *Underneath It All: Necessities and Normalities of Any Marriage, Dealing with the Effecting Components: Balancing the Demands, Dealing with the Affected Components: Us First* and *The Force's Role: Continuing with the Momentum and Moving Forward.* Essentially, participants identified a number of elements and strategies that they have employed to maintain their relationships, in light of the many stressors of police work that they identified within the first theme.

As outlined in the original proposal, one of the primary goals of this study was to form a clearer theoretical understanding of the factors involved in developing and maintaining an RCMP marriage. Many researchers have conceptualised communication as the fundamental underlying factor that affects the quality of marriage (e.g., Canary et al., 2002; Gottman & Levenson, 2000; Huston et al., 2001). Participants in the current study certainly confirmed this notion, as the importance of open communication emerged often throughout the data. Researchers and theorists have suggested that within this communicative process, the use of certain maintenance strategies should help to promote relational resilience (e.g., Canary & Stafford, 1992). It has been suggested that maintenance strategies function to sustain desired attributes or "relational characteristics"

that have been considered essential to close relationships, including liking one's partner, love, trust, and commitment (Canary & Stafford, 1992, 1993, 1994, 2001; Fehr, 1993; Lemieux & Hale, 2000; Sahlstein & Baxter, 2001; Weigel & Ballard-Reisch, 1999a, 1999b). Within the current study, participants referred to the necessity of "relational characteristics" within their marriage, describing many of these as important *Underneath It All* (e.g., commitment, love, trust).

In terms of maintenance strategies, one of the more commonly-referred to typologies of relational maintenance was developed by Stafford and Canary (1991). Originally, these authors outlined five strategies deemed most important among couples: positivity (being upbeat and cheerful); openness (disclosure and willingness to communicate); assurances (expressing commitment, faithfulness, love); network (involvement with social networks); and sharing tasks (sharing household chores and self-growth activities).

As Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) highlighted, researchers have found that results aimed at predicting the use of relational maintenance strategies have been variable at best. The authors suggested that one reason for this variability lies in the instability of the construct of relational maintenance across different samples and types of relationships. Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) suggested that individual difference variables may account for some of this variability. Within the context of the current study, it appears as though a marital partner's occupation may be an individual difference that could be considered as a contributing factor to the use of maintenance strategies in marriage.

Work-family conflict has been identified as especially prominent within police families (e.g., Alexander & Walker, 1996; Burke, 1993, 1994; Gentz & Taylor, 1994), as participants in the current study confirmed. Thus, it was discovered that taking occupational factors into account may be helpful in understanding the use of general relational maintenance strategies. For example, although *sharing tasks* has been identified as a particularly important relational maintenance strategy by previous researchers (Aron et al., 2001; Dainton & Stafford, 1993; Ragsdale, 1996), equity in household tasks might not be feasible in policing relationships, especially in the early phases of an officer's career when rotational shiftwork and VOT are particularly necessary. With respect to *sharing tasks* that might promote self-growth, however, participants identified the necessity of making time to spend together, despite the demands of rotational shiftwork as well as the demands of parenthood. Participants in this study also highlighted the need for *openness* in their relationship and reiterated the absolute importance of having their partner (namely the officer spouse) be willing to communicate and self-disclose, despite the fact that previous researchers have suggested that openness may not be as important as the other maintenance strategies (Canary & Stafford, 1992; Dainton & Stafford, 1993). *Positivity* was another strategy employed; however, this was noted primarily by the female spouses. Researchers have confirmed that there are gender differences in the use of specific strategies (e.g., Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005), and it appears that this also may be the case in RCMP marriages. With respect to the *network* aspect, RCMP couples are often in a unique position in that they are usually posted away from their extended family. Some participants described the necessity of carefully having to select their social network, due to the nature of

RCMP work. Non-Member spouses, in particular, further suggested the importance of seeking out and creating a supportive network as integral for coping with some of the inherent stressors of police work. Thus, it appears that the networking strategy might have unique and important implications in the maintenance of RCMP relationships. Finally, *assurances* were not discussed in great detail as a particularly important factor, other than perhaps as a response to dealing with the dangerous aspect of the job.

Given these apparent differences regarding the use of specific maintenance strategies, based on this initial qualitative exploration, perhaps it might be beneficial to explore further the influence that occupation has in identifying the use of relational maintenance strategies. Ragsdale and Brandau-Brown (2005) have recently suggested that rather than searching for interpersonal sources of motivation or variations in the evolution of the relationship, researchers might be able to construct something more like "a profile of the relational maintainer" (p.72). They suggested that knowledge that such behaviour might lie in individual differences (e.g., gender differences or perhaps occupational influences) could be of great benefit to understanding interpersonal and family communication (Ragsdale & Brandau-Brown, 2005).

Outside the generalities of Stafford and Canary's (1991) typology, participants mentioned a number of specific behaviours they employed that were particularly relevant to maintaining their marriage. Participants identified ways in which they dealt with the *Effecting* and *Affected Components* of the job on their lives. In particular, participants noted that the early part of their careers with the RCMP were the most challenging in terms of juggling work and home life, generally because the expectations of new Members were high, and the subsequent demands placed on their relationship were new

to the spouse and the officer. Participants, overall, discussed the importance of working together within their marital relationships towards developing a balance between the demands of the job and home life. They described this as a process and noted that it was common to many of them to find themselves unbalanced, particularly at the beginning of their careers. The key for many of the participants in the current study appeared to be the conscious desire on the part of both the officer and the spouse to work towards keeping the demands of the job in check within the bigger picture of their family's well-being.

Many of the factors involved in the maintenance of most marital relationships also seem applicable to those involved with RCMP marriages. Canary and colleagues (2002) affirmed the importance of the ongoing use of maintenance strategies for relationship well-being and further conceptualised relational characteristics (i.e., liking, trust, commitment) as *outcomes* of maintenance activities. That is, the authors have suggested that maintenance strategies promote important relational characteristics, which in turn motivate people to engage in other pro-relationship behaviour. It is proposed that these "other pro-relationship behaviours" may consist of many of the insights and coping mechanisms that RCMP couples in the current study proposed as specific to sustaining their marriage (i.e., *Dealing with the Effecting* and *Affected Components*) (see Figure 10). For example, these may include some of the specific strategies outlined for dealing with the stress of shiftwork or the dangerousness of the job, as well as the specific strategies outlined for dealing with the influences on the spouse's career, such as being flexible.

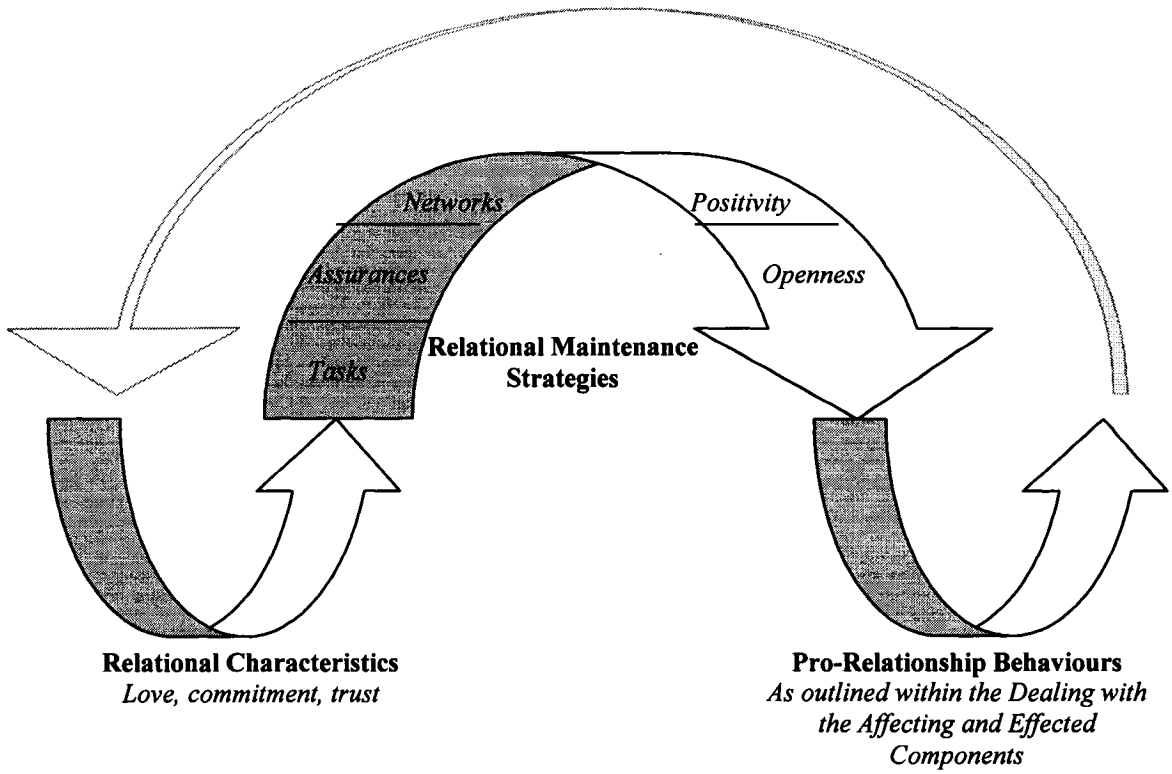

Figure 10. Proposed Model of the Relational Maintenance Process in RCMP Marriages

In this preliminary study, it appears as though there may be individual differences regarding the degree to which maintenance strategies are used. Following from the ongoing use of these strategies, partners may be more likely to engage in the further specific pro-relationship behaviours, as outlined in this research. In turn, participants' willingness to engage in these maintenance strategies may serve to strengthen the core relational characteristics.

Taken within the context of the developmental transitions in marriage (newlyweds, the potential parenthood phase, and midlife and beyond), along with the transitions that occur as police officers and their spouses progress through an RCMP career (i.e., Depot, first posting, subsequent postings) this relational maintenance process (see Figure 10) can likely be conceptualized as an on-going cycle. Undoubtedly, different maintenance strategies and pro-relationship behaviours will be required during the various transitions along both the marital and career paths (see Figure 11). For example, participants explained that during parenthood, they had to make a concerted effort to spend time together (*sharing tasks*), and, during transfer times, couples talked about the importance of employing the networking strategy to assist in sustaining their relationship.

The role that the Force may play is also included in this preliminary conceptualisation. As participants noted, it would have been most helpful to have support from the organisation early in their careers. Specific suggestions for Force support will be summarised in the next section.

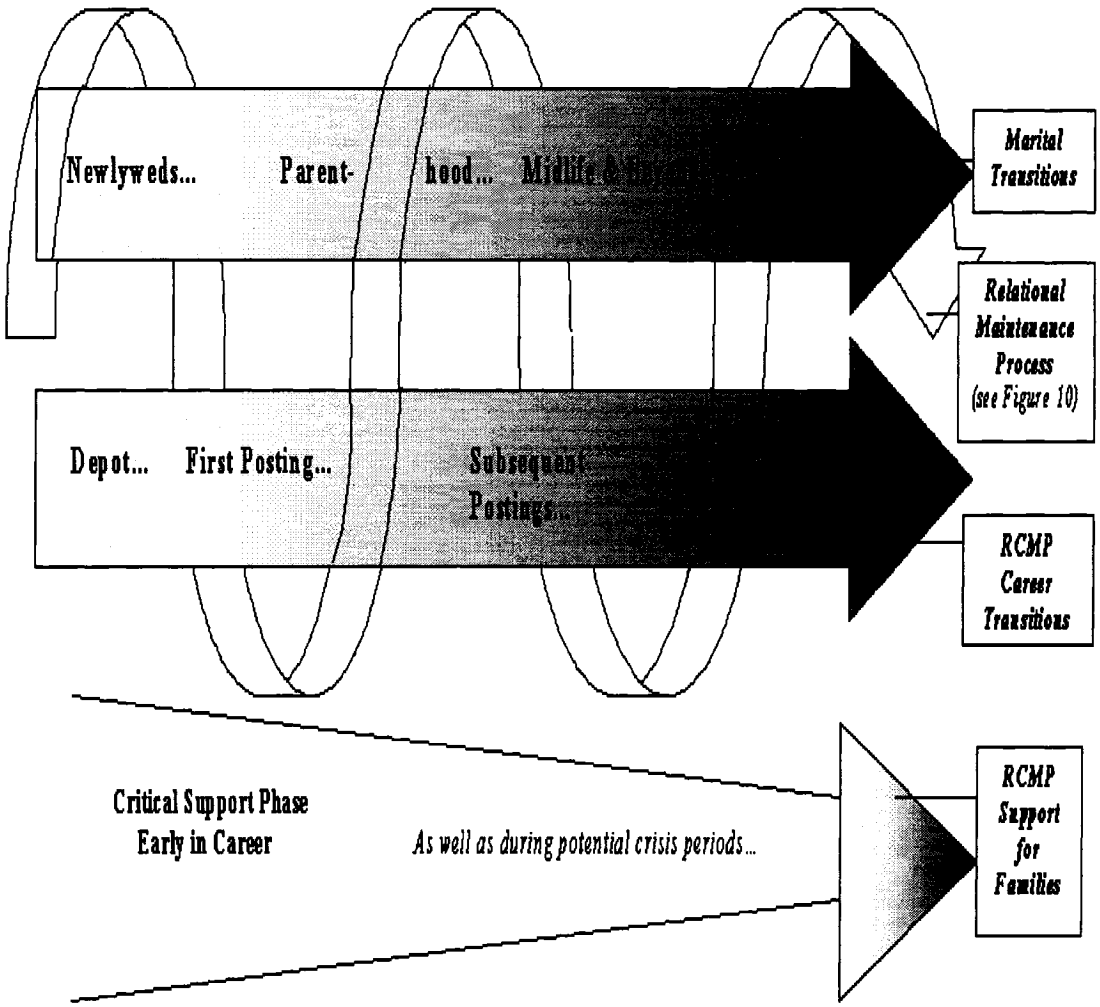

Figure 11: Proposed RCMP Relational Maintenance Model

A secondary goal within the current research was to provide recommendations and potential intervention strategies that may serve to promote the health and longevity of police marriages. Emerging in the fourth super-construct, *The Force's Role*, participants outlined a number of areas in which they suggested that the Force could be more helpful. These recommendations have been summarised below.

3.3.5.1 Recommendations and Suggestions

A. Spousal Resources. In line with what many of the non-Member spousal participants discussed, it appears as though support during the very beginning of their partner's career would have been most helpful. A suggestion could be to include a spousal information component during training. One participant discussed her experience of speaking with the spouses of the cadets just prior to their graduation, but noted that this might have been "too late".

> So, just knowing what you're getting into is the biggest thing I'd have for a wife [of a new police officer]. And that's the kind of message I was hoping that [wife's name] would put across to that troop she spoke to. But you know what, at that point, it's too late. Because, they're on their graduation week. [laughing] So, whether they knew it or not, they're at that stage....

Thus, the next step may be to develop, in conjunction with RCMP Health Services, a programme for spouses and significant others of cadets in the later stages of the training process. Using the results of this study as a basis, it may be important to explore, more specifically, the information that new Member spouses would find most beneficial, perhaps by way of focus groups with spouses who are at their first posting. Gathering this information and proposing a one- or two-day workshop for spouses and then piloting this with a graduating class of cadets may provide useful information on the efficacy of such an intervention.

In a related effort, as suggested by participants, it might also be a worthwhile endeavour to develop a handbook of "frequently asked questions", based on a survey of spouses and officers at their first posting. This information could then be prepared by way of a mini-publication and disseminated to the Member and their spouse prior to arrival at their first posting. Although it might not be relevant to all couples, some of the participants who were interviewed for the current study were considered "newlyweds" and were at their first posting. Because it has been suggested that newlyweds experience the sharpest drop in marital satisfaction of any other marital period (Kurdek, 1998), support for officers and their families might be even more important during this time.

Another related suggestion by participants was the availability of a resource person for spouses. Some participants indicated that the M/EAP programme can be accessed by spouses of Members; however, many of the spouses reported that either they were not aware of this or were unsure if they would feel comfortable accessing this resource. A suggestion might be to design a similar support system specifically for spouses. An idea could be to develop, once again in conjunction with RCMP Health Services, a resource list of spouses within each province that could be provided to the spouses either during their first post or when a cross-provincial transfer occurred. There may be different challenges or specific resources that spouses in each province might be aware of.

B. Balanced Leadership. Both spouses and Members described the necessity for those in leadership positions to "walk the talk". It appears as though the Force's "wellness initiative", described by participants as an effort to promote a healthy work-home balance, was well received by participants who were familiar with it. Participants

suggested, however, that in their perception it was difficult to live up to the expectations of some of the demands of the Force without sacrificing their family. One specific suggestion, within this context, was the importance of the officer's direct supervisor being "on board" and supportive of the work-family balance. As others have pointed out within the work-family literature, supervisor support is a very important factor in promoting stability at home (Galinsky & Stein, 1990; Grzywacz & Marks, 2000; Hammer et al., 2005). Thus, it might be a useful initiative to develop a supervisor training course aimed at highlighting the importance of fostering a healthy work-home balance. It should be noted that participants were clear that police work is demanding and they understood that sometimes their relationship/family needs would come second to the requirements of the job. They also reported, however, that balancing family priorities with work priorities should not mean compromising their career.

C. Staffing Vigilance. As many participants discussed, being posted close to family during the course of their careers was an important factor in maintaining their marital relationship. Although many participants acknowledged the difficulty on the part of Staffing in terms of being vigilant of each Member's specific career, many felt that an increased awareness of individual Member needs would certainly be a worthwhile investment.

Participants also suggested that having a protected amount of time to move during transfers was important to them. Although some participants commented that, in their experience, the Force was very supportive during moving time, others suggested that they found the transition between some postings more difficult, as their Member-spouse was required to be at work immediately. It is obvious that individual circumstances may

determine the amount of moving time available; however, it might be helpful to allow a certain amount of protected moving time, when possible, to assist in the transition by the family as well as the Member.

CHAPTER 4: CONCLUSIONS

4.1. The Integration of Their Stories: Searching for the Balance

The word "balance" surfaced repeatedly throughout the course of the interviews. As well, during the analysis, "balance" was a word I found emerging often to explain many of the insights and strategies that participants expressed. In the English language, balance is a complex word. As a noun, balance is defined as "a set of scales or a weighing apparatus that indicates an equal distribution between both sides" (Merriam-Webster, 2002). This form of balance is likely not attainable within the work-home domain, which is partially why the operative word "searching" was included in the overarching concept. As many participants articulated, there were times in their marriage during which they felt "unbalanced", either because of life demands (e.g., children, illness) or because of job demands (e.g., stressful job situations, at transfer time). What appeared critical, however, was the sense that the Member in particular, as well as the spouse, had the desire to *search* continually for a balance between the job demands of the RCMP and their family life.

Balance also has a physical and psychological connotation as "stability of body or mind" (American Heritage Dictionary, 2000). In psychology in particular, we focus much of our efforts towards assisting those who we can observe or those who self-report to be struggling with their emotional balance. We also understand that this stability is a fluctuating process and that, at times, imbalance is not only possible, but perhaps expected. The diagram (see Figure 2, p. 39) created to depict the relationship between work and the marital relationship within the RCMP, was designed to reflect this fluctuating process. Thus, balance can have both an objective and subjective meaning

and measurement; it will vary according to the circumstances and it will also vary amongst individuals (Guest, 2001).

Furthermore, in the English language, balance is also a verb, defined as "to off-set or compare; to equal or neutralise, to bring or come into equilibrium" (Merriam-Webster, 2002). Human agency is implied within this definition, in which it is suggested that individuals can take steps to manage balance. Perhaps by way of disseminating the results of this research, future spouses and Members may benefit from the strategies and insights so generously provided by the participants in this project. The specific recommendations outlined above may also serve to facilitate the necessity of "searching" for a balance to promote the health and longevity of RCMP marriages.

4.2. Potential Limitations and Future Directions

Although this research appears long overdue in terms of gaining a better understanding of police marriages, to some quantitatively-oriented researchers, it may appear that taking a qualitative approach to exploring these issues was a limitation, as the results may not appear "generalisable" to the wider police world. It is important for the reader to remember that this study was not designed to be applicable to all police officers, even within the RCMP. For example, not every rank in the RCMP was represented in this study, as no commissioned officers volunteered to participate. As well, there were no male non-police spouses who participated. Our purpose at this point in our programme of research, however, was not to extend the results to represent all police marriages. Our intent with this project was to reflect accurately each participant's perceptions, opinions, and insights and to glean an initial understanding of the complexities involved in an RCMP marriage. A useful avenue for future research may be

to explore whether Members of commissioned ranks and spouses of these officers would share the perspectives of participants in this study. Undoubtedly, male non-police spouses will also provide insights that have not been considered and their contribution to the overall understanding of the police marriage relationship will be important.

The participants in the current study provided rich information that may be used as the basis for future directions of research, including implementing the recommendations based on participant suggestions, as outlined above. Furthermore, it might be beneficial to explore, in more detail, the relational maintenance strategies used by RCMP officers and their spouses with a larger sample. In fact, the Relational Maintenance Strategy Measure (RMSM) initially developed by Stafford and Canary (1991) and refined by Canary and Stafford (1992) is an operationalised measure that has been widely used with a diversity of populations (see Dindia, 2000). Given that it appears as though RCMP officers and their spouses may use specific strategies more readily than others, it might be useful next to explore these strategies more systematically. This may provide useful information for researchers comparing individual differences in the use of maintenance strategies. It may also provide a general overview of the strategies that RCMP officers and their spouses find most effective, with a focus on how these may differ from those in other relationships. This, along with the findings of the current study, may provide a clearer picture of the "profile of the RCMP relational maintainer", which may prove useful for assisting in maintaining present and future RCMP marriages.

The eighteen women and men who participated in this study generously provided an understanding of the experiences of RCMP officers and their spouses in the context of

their marital and familial relationships and subsequently, a basis for future research. It was an honour and a privilege to hear their stories. It is hoped that by representing their voices, future Members and spouses will benefit from the insight and wisdom of the officers and spouses who participated in this study.

4.3 Concluding Remarks

Prior to beginning this project, I was told that conducting qualitative research can be a life-altering experience. As this dissertation, my first official foray into qualitative research, comes to a close, I find compelled to comment that I whole-heartedly agree. Others also explained, albeit less exuberantly (including my supervisor and my committee members), that qualitative research is, indeed, an arduous endeavour. I recall many times sitting with the quotes, spread around the floor, desperately trying to figure out how all of those pieces of paper were ever going to fit together (many of these instances included tears). I found that I had such a desire to "get it right" and to represent the words of the participants accurately that I became my own worst enemy during the months of analysis. There were also those "ah ha" moments (thankfully), when the words of the participants would jump off the scraps of paper known as quotes and there would be that amazing moment of clarity. Some of the other most enjoyable moments were the interviews themselves. I tried hard to capture the dedication and commitment that many of the participants held for the RCMP, and perhaps more importantly, the passion and commitment that many of them held for their spouse. Not being married (yet), I found that I learned a great deal from the participants about the incredible intricacies of the marital relationship, and often find myself reflecting on their comments as I manoeuvre through my own relationship. I am so thankful to have had the

opportunity to experience the truly "life-altering" practice of qualitative research with a group of participants and a supervisor who so willingly made this such an enjoyable experience.

CHAPTER 5: REFERENCES

Adams, J. M. & Jones, W. H. (1997). The conceptualization of marital commitment: An integrative analysis. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72,* 1177-1196.

Aharon, C. H. (1984). A policeman's life and marital problems. *RCMP Gazette, 46,* 13-16.

Akerstedt, T. (1990). Psychological and physiological effects of shift work. *Scandinavian Journal of Work and Environmental Health, 16,* 67-73.

Alexander, D. A. & Walker, L. G. (1996). The perceived impact of police work on police officers' spouses and families. *Stress Medicine, 12,* 239-246.

Allen, K. R. & Walker, A. J. (2000). Qualitative research. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 19-30). London: Sage.

Allen, T. D., Herst, D. E., Bruck, C. S., & Sutton, M. (2000). Consequences associated with work-to-family conflict: A review and agenda for future research. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5,* 278-308.

Almeida, D. M., & Kessler, R. C. (1998). Everyday stressors and gender differences in daily distress. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 75,* 670-680.

American Heritage Dictionary (2000). *Dictionary of the English language, 4th Ed.* New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Anshel, M. H., Robertson, M., & Caputi, P. (1997). Sources of acute stress and their appraisals and reappraisals among Australian police as a function of previous experience. *British Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 70,* 337-356.

Apter, T. (1995). *Secret paths: Women in the new midlife.* New York: Norton.

Aron, A., Norman, C. C., & Aron, E. N. (2001). Shared self-expanding activities as a means of maintaining and enhancing close romantic relationships. In W. C. Nichols, M. Pace-Nichols, D. S. Becvar, & A Y. Napier (Eds.), *Handbook of family development and intervention* (pp. 47-66). New York: Wiley.

Austin, W. (1996). *The socialisation of women police: Male officer hostility to female police officers.* Paper presented at the Australian Institute of Criminology Conference.

Aylor, B. (2004). Biological sex and psychological gender as predictors of routine and strategic relational maintenance. *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research, 12,* 46-61.

Ayres, J. (1983). Strategies to maintain relationships: Their identification and perceived usage. *Communication Quarterly, 31,* 62-67.

Bailyn, L. (1997). The impact of corporate culture on work-family integration. In S. Parasuraman & J. H. Greenhaus (Eds.), *Integrating work and family: Challenges and choices for a changing world* (pp. 209-219). Westport: Quorum Books.

Bakker, A. B., Demerouti, E., & Euwema, M. C. (2005). Job resources buffer the impact of job demands on burnout. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10,* 170-180.

Bazeley, P. and Richards, L. (2002). *The NVivo qualitative project book.* London: Sage Publications.

Barnett, R. (1998). Toward a review and reconceptualization of the work/family literature. *Genetic, Social, and General Psychology Monograph, 124,* 125-182.

Barnett, R.C., & Brennan, R. T. (1997). Change in job conditions and change in psychological distress, and gender: A longitudinal study of dual-earner couples. Journal of *Organizational Behavior, 23,* 253-274.

Baxter, L. A., & Montgomery, B. M. (1997). Rethinking communication in personal relationships from a dialectical perspective. In S. Duck (Ed.), 2nd Ed., *Handbook of personal relationships: Theory, research, and interventions* (pp. 325-349). Chichester, U.K.: Wiley.

Beaujot, R., & Haddad, T. (2000). Productivity patterns at mid-life: Family and work. *Canadian Studies in Population, 27,* 43-62.

Bell, L. (1988). The unfair family affair. *Police: The Law Officer's Magazine, 12,* 29-31.

Bell, R., Daly, J., & Gonzalez, C. (1987). Affinity-maintenance in marriage and its relationship to women's marital satisfaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 49,* 445-454.

Belsky, J., & Kelly, J. (1994). *The transition to parenthood.* New York: Dell.

Berman, E., & Napier, A. Y. (2000). The midlife family: Dealing with adolescents, Young Adults, and the Marriage in Transition. In W. C. Nichols, M. Pace-Nichols, D. S. Becvar, & A Y. Napier (Eds.), *Handbook of family development and intervention* (pp. 208-234). New York: Wiley.

Bolger, N., DeLongis, A., Kessler, R., & Wethington, E. (1989). The contagion of stress across multiple roles. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 51,* 175-183.

Bradbury, T. N., Fincham, F. D., & Beach, S. R. H. (2000). Research on the nature and determinants of marital satisfaction: A decade in review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62,* 964-980.

Bradstreet, R. (1994). Cultural hurdles to healthy police families. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 19-26). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Brooks, L. W., & Piquero, N. L. (1998). Police stress: Does department size matter? *Policing: An International Journal of Strategies and Management, 4,* 600-617.

Brown, J., & Grover, J. (1998). The role of moderating variables between stressor exposure and being distressed in a sample of serving police officers. *Personality and Individual Differences, 24, 2,* 181-185.

Burke, R. J. (1993). Toward an understanding of psychological burnout among police officers. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality, 8,* 425-438.

Burke, R. J. (1994). Stressful events, work-family conflict, coping, psychological burnout, and well-being among police officers. *Psychological Reports, 75,* 787-800.

Burke, R. J. (2000). Effects of sex, parental status, and spouse work involvement in dual-career couples. *Psychological Reports, 87,* 919-927.

Burleson, B. R., & Denton, W. H. (1997). The relationship between communication skill and marital satisfaction: Some moderating effects. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 59,* 884-308.

Burleson, B. R., Metts, S., & Kirch, M. W. (2000). Communication in close relationships. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 245-258). London: Sage.

Canary, D. J., & Messman, S. J. (2001). Relationship conflict. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 261-270). London: Sage.

Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1992). Relational maintenance strategies and equity in marriage. *Communication Monographs, 59,* 243-267.

Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1993). Preservation of relational characteristics. Maintenance strategies, equity, and locus of control. In P. J. Kabfleisch (Ed.), *Interpersonal communication* (pp. 237-259). Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (1994). Maintaining relationships through strategic and routine interaction. In D. J. Canary & L. Stafford (Eds.), *Communication and relational maintenance* (pp. 3-12). San Diego C. A.: Academic Press.

Canary, D. J., & Stafford, L. (2001). Equity in the preservation of personal relationships. In J. H. Harvey & A. Wenzel (Eds.), *Close romantic relationships: Maintenance and enhancement* (pp. 133-151). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Canary, D. J., Stafford, L., & Semic, B. A. (2002). A panel study of the associations between maintenance strategies and relational characteristics. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 64,* 395-406.

Cappelli, P., Constantine, J., & Chadwick, C. (2000). It pays to value family: Work and family tradeoffs reconsidered. *Industrial Relations, 39,* 175-198.

Carlson, D. S., & Kacmar, K. M. (2000). Work-family conflict in the organization: Do life role values make a difference? *Journal of Management, 26,* 1031-1043.

Carrere, S., & Gottman, J. M. (1999). Predicting divorce among newlyweds from the first three minutes of a marital conflict discussion. *Family Process, 38,* 293-301.

Carstensen, L. L., Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1995). Emotional behavior in long-term marriage. *Psychology and Aging, 10,* 140-149.

Chadwick, B. A., & Heaton, T. B. (1999). *Statistical handbook on the American family* (2nd Ed.). Phoenix, AZ: Oryx.

Chance, S. (1988). Partners in life. *Police: The Law Officer's Magazine, 12,* 32-35.

Cherry, T. M., & Lester, D. (1979). An exploratory study of police officers' satisfaction in marriage. *Psychological Reports, 45,* 794.

Christensen, A., & Walczynski, P. T. (1997). Conflict and satisfaction in couples. In R. J. Sternberg & M. Hojjat (Eds.), *Satisfaction in close relationships* (pp. 249-274). New York: Guilford Press.

Clarke, S. C. (2000). Work/family border theory: A new theory of work/family balance. *Human Relations, 53,* 747-770.

Coltrane, S. (1996). *Family man.* New York: Oxford University Press.

Cotton, S., Antill, J., & Cunningham, J. (1993). Network structure, network support, and the marital satisfaction of husbands and wives. *Australian Journal of Psychology, 45,* 176-181.

Cowan, C. P., & Cowan, C. P. (1992). *When partners become parents: The big life change for couples.* New York: Basic Books.

Cutrona, C. E. (1996). *Social support in couples.* New York: Sage.

Dainton, M., & Stafford, L. (1993). Routine maintenance behaviors: A comparison of relationship type, partner similarity, and sex differences. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10,* 255-271.

Davila, J., Bradbury, T. N., Cohan, C. L., & Tolchluk, S. (1997). Marital functioning and depressive symptoms: Evidence for a stress generation model. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 73,* 849-861.

Dindia, K., (1997). Self-disclosure and self and relationship identity: A transactional/dialectical perspective. In S. Duck (Ed.), 2nd Ed., *Handbook of personal relationships* (pp. 113-133). England: Wiley.

Dindia, K. (2000). Relational maintenance. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 287-299). London: Sage.

Dindia, K., & Canary, D. J. (1993). Definitions and theoretical perspectives on relational maintenance. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10,* 163-173.

Duncan, J. (1974). *Red Serge Wives.* RCMP: Centennial Book Committee.

Durner, J., Kroeher, M., Miller, C., & Reynolds, W. (1975). Divorce: Another occupational hazard. *The Police Chief, November,* 23-28.

Duxbury, L., & Higgins, C. (2003). *Work-life conflict in Canada in the new millennium: A status report.* Public Health Agency of Canada, http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/publicat/work-travail/report2/.

Dye, J. F., Schatz, I. M., Rosenberg, B. A., & Coleman, S. T. (2000). Constant comparative method: A Kaleidoscope of data. *The Qualitative Report, 4,* http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR3-4/dye.html.

Evans, B.J., Coman, G.J., Stanley, R.O., & Burrows, G.D. (1993). Police officers' coping strategies: An Australian police survey. *Stress Medicine, 9*(4), 237-246.

Fehr, B. (1993). How do I love thee? Let me consult my prototype. In S. Duck (Ed.), *Individuals in relationships* (pp. 87-120). Newbury Park, C. A.: Sage.

Fehr, B. (2001). The status of theory and research on love and commitment. In G. J. O. Fletcher & M. S. Clark (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of social psychology: Interpersonal processes* (pp. 331-356). Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Forthofer, M. S., Markman, H. J., Cox, M., Stanley, S., & Kessler, R. C. (1996). Associations between marital distress and work loss in a national sample. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 58,* 597-605.

Frone, M. R., Russell, M., & Cooper, M. L. (1992). Prevalence of work-family conflict: Are work and family boundaries asymmetrically permeable? *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 13,* 723-729.

Frone, M. R., Yardley, J. K., & Markel, K. S. (1997). Developing and testing an integrative model of the work-family interface. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 50,* 145-167.

Galinsky, E., & Stein, P. J. (1990). The impact of human resource policies on employees: Balancing work/family life. *Journal of Family Issues, 8,* 368-383.

Gentz, D., & Taylor, D. (1994). Marital status and attitudes about divorce among veteran law enforcement officers. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 67-71). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Gist, R. M., & Taylor, V. H. (1996). Line of duty deaths and their effect on co-workers and their families. *The Police Chief, 63, 5,* 34-37.

Glenn, N. D. (1998). The course of marital success and failure in five American 10-year marriage cohorts. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60,* 569-576.

Goodwin, S.L. (1999). *The experience of combining motherhood with career for members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada.

Gottman, J. M. (1993). A theory of marital dissolution and stability. *Journal of Family Psychology, 7,* 57-75.

Gottman, J. M. (1994). *Why marriages succeed or fail.* New York: Fireside.

Gottman, J. M. (1998). Psychology and the study of marital processes. *Annual Review of Psychology, 49,* 169-197.

Gottman, J. M., & Notarius, C. I. (2000). Decade review: Observing marital interaction. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62,* 927-947.

Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (1992). Marital processes predictive of later dissolution: Behavior, physiology, and health. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 63,* 221-233.

Gottman, J. M., & Levenson, R. W. (2000). The timing of divorce: Predicting when a couple will divorce over a 14-year period. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62, 737-745.

Gottman, J. M., & Silver, N. (1999). The two kinds of marital conflict. In *The Seven Principles for Making Marriages Work* (pp. 129-155). New York: Three Rivers Press.

Greenhaus, J. H., Parasuraman, S., & Collins, K. M. (2001). Career involvement and family involvement as moderators of relationships between work-family conflict and withdrawal from a profession. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 6,* 91-100.

Grosswald, B. (2003). Shift work and negative work-to-family spillover. *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare, 33,* 1-21

Grzywacz, J. G., & Butler, A. B. (2005). The impact of job characteristics on work-to-family facilitation: Testing a theory and distinguishing a construct. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10,* 97-109.

Grzywacz, J. G., & Marks, N. F. (2000). Reconceptualizing the work-family interface: An ecological perspective on the correlates of positive and negative spillover between work and family. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 5,* 111-126.

Guest, D. E. (2001). *Perspectives on the study of work-life balance.* A discussion paper prepared for the 2001 ENOP Symposium. Paris, March. http://www.ucm.es/info/Psyap/enop/guest.htm.

Guerrero, L. K., & Anderson, P. A. (2000). Emotion in close relationships. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 171-183). London: Sage.

Guerrero, L. K., Eloy, S. V., & Wabnik, A. L. (1993). Linking maintenance strategies to relationship development and disengagement: A reconceptualization. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 10,* 273-283.

Haas, S. M., & Stafford, L. (2005). Maintenance behaviors in same-sex and marital relationships: A matched sample comparison. *The Journal of Family Communication, 5,* 43-60.

Hammer, L. B., Cullen, J. C., Neal, M. B., Sinclair, R. R., & Shafiro, M. V. (2005). The longitudinal effects of work-family conflict and positive spillover on depressive symptoms among dual-earner couples. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 10,* 138-154.

Heidensohn, F. (1992). *Women in control: The role of women in law enforcement.* Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hendrick, S. S. (2004). *Understanding close relationships.* New York: Allyn & Bacon.

Hertz, R., & Charlton, J. (1989). Making family under a shiftwork schedule: Air force security guards and their wives. *Social Problems, 36(5),* 491-507.

Hochschild, A.R. (1997). *The time blind: When work becomes home and home becomes work.* New York: Metropolitan/Holt.

Hossain, J. L., & Shapiro, C. M. (1999). Considerations and possible consequences of shift work. *Journal of Psychosomatic Research, 47,* 293-296.

Houseknecht, S. K. (1987). Voluntary childlessness. In M. B. Sussman & S. K. Steinmetz (Eds.), *Handbook of marriage and the family* (pp. 369-395). New York: Plenum.

Huston, T. L., Caughlin, J. P., Houts, R. M., Smith, S. E., & George, L. J. (2001). The connubial crucible: Newlywed years as predictors of marital delight, distress, and divorce. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 80,* 237-252.

Inwald, R. E., Gebbia, M. I., & Resko, J. A. (1994). Three studies of police spouse/mate relationships using the Hilson Spouse/Mate Inventory. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 35-40). Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice.

Johnson, S. M., & Williams-Keeler, L. (1998). Creating healing relationships for couples dealing with trauma: The use of emotionally focused marital therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 24,* 25-40.

Jones F., & Fletcher, B. (1996). Taking work home: A study of daily fluctuations in work stressors, effects of moods and impacts on marital partners. *Journal of Occupational Psychology, 69,* 89-107.

Kelloway, E. K., & Barling, J. (1995). Stress, control, well-being, and marital functioning: A causal correlational analysis. In G. P. Keita & J. J. Hurrell (Eds.), Job stress in changing workforce (pp. 241-251). Washington: American Psychological Association.

Kelloway, E. K., Gottlieb, B. H., & Barham, L. (1999). The source, nature, and direction of work and family conflict: A longitudinal investigation. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 4,* 337-346.

Kelly, W., & Kelly, N. (1973). *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, a centennial history.* Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers.

Khaleque, A. (1999). Sleep deficiency and quality of life of shift workers. *Social Indicators Research, 46,* 181-189.

Kinnunen, U., & Mauno, S. (1998). Antecedents and outcomes of work-family conflict among employed women in Finland. *Human Relations, 51,* 157-177.

Kirschman, E. (1997). *I love a cop: What police families need to know.* New York: The Guilford Press.

Klein, R. (1994). Training peer counselors to provide the initial intervention in law enforcement relationship problems. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 345-351). Washington, DC: United States Department of Justice.

Kurdek, L. A. (1998). Relationship outcomes and their predictors: Longitudinal evidence from heterosexual married, gay cohabiting, and lesbian cohabiting couples. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 60,* 553-568.

Larson, R., & Gillman, S. (1999). Transmission of emotion in the daily interactions of single-mother families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 61* , 21-37

Leiter, M. P., & Durup, M. J. (1996). Work, home, and in-between: A longitudinal study of spillover. *Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 32,* 29-47.

Lemieux, R., & Hale, J. L. (2000). Intimacy, passion, and commitment among married individuals: Further testing of the Triangular Theory of Love. *Psychological Reports, 87,* 941-948.

Lewis, K. (1999). *The forces of change: A qualitative analysis of perspectives on effective policing by Royal Canadian Mounted Police members.* Unpublished master's thesis, University of Regina, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada.

Lindahl, K. M., Clements, M., & Markman, H. (1998). The development of marriage: A 9-year perspective. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 205-236). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Lobel, S. A., & St. Clair, L. (1992). Effects of family responsibilities, gender, and career identity salience on performance outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal, 35,* 1057-1069.

Lowenstein, L. F. (1999). Treating stress in the police force. *The Police Journal, 72,* 65-74. Matthews, L. S., Conger, R. D., & Wickrama, K. A. (1996). Work-family conflict and marital quality: Mediating processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 59,* 62-79.

Merriam-Webster (2002). *The Merriam-Webster's collegiate dictionary.* New York: Merriam-Webster.

MacEwen, K. E., & Barling, J. (1994). Daily consequences of work interference with family and family interference with work. *Work and Stress, 8,* 244-254.

Marshall, L. L. (1994). Physical and psychological abuse. In W. R. Cupach & B. H. Spitzberg (Eds.), *The dark side of interpersonal communication* (pp. 281-311). Hillsdale, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Matthews, L. S., Conger, R. D., & Wickrama, K. A. (1996). Work-family conflict and marital quality: Mediating processes. *Social Psychology Quarterly, 59,* 62-79.

Mauno, S. & Kinnunen, U. (1999). The effects of job stressors on marital satisfaction in Finnish dual-earner couples. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 20,* 879-895.

McCafferty, F. L., McCafferty, E., & McCafferty, A. (1992). Stress and suicide in police officers: Paradigm of occupational stress. *Southern Medical Journal, 85,* 233-43.

Meeks, B. S., Hendrick, S. S., & Hendrick, C. (1998). Communication, love and relationship satisfaction. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15,* 755-773.

Mertens, D. M (1998). *Research methods in education and psychology: Integrating diversity with quantitative and qualitative approaches.* London: Sage Publications.

Milardo, R. M., & Helms-Erikson, H. (2000). Network overlap and third-party influence in close relationships. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 33-45). London: Sage.

Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis 2nd edition.* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Morrison, D. L., & Clements, R. (1997). The effect of one partner's job characteristics on the other partner's distress: A serendipitous, but naturalistic, experiment. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology, 70,* 307-324.

Myers, S. M., & Booth, A. (1996). Men's retirement and marital quality. *Journal of Family Issues, 17(3),* 336-357.

National Marriage Project (1999). *The social health of marriage in America.* Rutgers University: New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Nelson, B. S., & Wright, D. W. (1996). Understanding and treating posttraumatic stress disorder symptoms in female partners of veterans with PTSD. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 22,* 455-467.

O'Donohue, W., & Crouch, J. L. (1996). Marital therapy and gender-linked factors in communication. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 22,* 87-101.

Pasley, K., Kerpelman, J., & Guilbert, D. (2001). Gendered conflict, identity disruption, and marital instability: Expanding Gottman's model. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18(1),* 5-27.

Patton, M. Q (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods.* Newbury Park, C.A.: Sage.

Perren, S., von Wyl, A., Simoni, H., Stadlmayr, W., Burgin, D., & von Klitzing, K. (2003). Parental psychopathology, marital quality, and the transition to parenthood. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, 73,* 55–64.

Perrone, K. M., & Worthington, E. L., Jr. (2001). Factors influencing ratings of marital quality by individuals within dual-career marriages: A conceptual model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 48,* 3-9.

Perry-Jenkins, M., Repetti, R. L., & Crouter, A. C. (2000). Work and family in the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62,* 981-998.

Phillips-Miller, D. L., Campbell, N. J., & Morrison, C. R. (2000). Work and family: Satisfaction, stress, and spousal support. *Journal of Employment Counseling, 37,* 16-37.

Prager, K.J. (2000). Intimacy in Personal Relationships. In S. Hendrick and C. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close Relationships* (pp. 229-244). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Prager, K. J., & Buhrmester, D. (1998). Intimacy and need fulfilment in couple relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 15,* 435-469.

Presser, H. B. (2004). Employment in a 27/7 economy: Challenges for the family. In A. Crouter & A. Booth (Eds.), *Work-family challenges for low-income parents and their children* (pp. 83-105). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Punyanunt-Carter, N. M. (2004). Reported affectionate communication and satisfaction in marital and dating relationships. *Psychological Reports, 95,* 1154-1160.

Ragsdale, J. D. (1996). Gender, satisfaction level, and the use of relational maintenance strategies in marriage. *Communication Monographs, 63,* 354-369.

Ragsdale, J. D., & Brandau-Brown, F. E. (2005). Individual differences in the use of relational maintenance strategies in marriage. *The Journal of Family Communication, 5,* 61-75.

Reiser, M. (1974). Some organizational stresses on policemen. *Journal of Police Science and Administration, 2,* 156-159.

Repetti, R. L. (1994). Short-term and long-term processes linking job stressors to father-child interaction. *Social Development, 3,* 1-15.

Repetti, R. L. (1998). The promise of a multiple roles paradigm for women's health research. *Women's Health: Research on Gender, Behavior, and Policy, 4,* 273-280.

Repetti, R. L., & Wood, J. (1997). Families accommodating to chronic stress: Unintended and unnoticed processes. In B. H. Gottlieb (Ed.), *Coping with chronic stress* (pp. 191-220). New York: Plenum Press.

Roberts, N. A., & Levenson, R. W. (2001). The remains of the workday: Impact of job stress and exhaustion on marital interaction in police couples. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 63,* 1052-1067.

Rogers, K. (1977). Marriage and the police officer. *The Police College Magazine, January,* 35-39.

Rogers, S. J., & Amato, P. R. (1997). Is marital quality declining? The evidence from two generations. *Social Forces, 75,* 1089-1100.

Rollins, B. C., & Feldman, H. (1970). Marital satisfaction over the family life cycle. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 32,* 20-28.

Rosenbluth, S. C., Steil, J. M., & Whitcomb, J. H. (1998). Marital equality: What does it mean? *Journal of Family Issues, 19,* 227-244.

Rothausen, T. J. (1994). Job satisfaction and the parent worker: The role of flexibility and rewards. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 44,* 317-336.

Rothausen, T. J. (1999). 'Family' in organizational research: A review and comparison of definitions and measures. *Journal of Organizational Behaviour, 20,* 817-836.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Health Services Policy Manual (2004). *Member/Employee Assistance Program policy.* Ottawa: RCMP Publication.

Rusbult, C. E., Bissonnette, V. L., Arriaga, X. B., & Cox, C. L. (1998). Accommodation processes during the early years of marriage. In T. N. Bradbury (Ed.), *The developmental course of marital dysfunction* (pp. 74-113). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Rusbult, C. E., Verette, J., Whitney, G. A., Slovik, L. F., & Lipkus, I. (1991). Accommodation processes in close relationships: Theory and preliminary empirical evidence. *Journal of Personal and Social Psychology, 60,* 53-78.

Ryan, A. M., Kriska, S. D., West, B. J., & Sacco, J. M. (2001). Anticipated work/family conflict and family member views: Role in police recruiting. *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies & Management, 24,* 228-239.

Sahlstein, E. M., & Baxter, L. A. (2001). Improvising commitment in close relationships: A relational dialectics perspective. In J. H. Harvey & A. Wenzel

(Eds.), *Close romantic relationships: Maintenance and enhancement* (pp. 115-132). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Schmuckler, E. (1994). The dual career family in law enforcement: A concern for management. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 41-49). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Scharch, D. (1997). *Passionate marriage.* New York: Norton.

Schulz, M. S., Cowan, P. A., Cowan, C. P., & Brennan, R. T. (2004). Coming home upset: Gender, marital satisfaction, and the daily spillover of workday experience into couple interactions. *Journal of Family Psychology, 18,* 250-263.

Schwartz, D. (1994). *An examination of the impact of family-friendly policies on the glass ceiling.* New York: Families and Work Institute.

Scrivner, E., & Reese, J. T. (1994). Family issues with no easy answers. In J. T. Reese & E. Scrivner (Eds.), *Law enforcement families: Issues and answers* (pp. 3-7). Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Justice: Federal Bureau of Investigations.

Simon, B. L. (1990). Impact of shift work on individuals and families. *Families in Society: The Journal of Contemporary Human Services, June,* 342-348.

Sims, A., & Sims, D. (1998). The phenomenology of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder: A symptomatic study of 70 victims of psychological trauma. *Psychopathology, 31,* 96-112.

South, S. J., & Spitze, G. (1994). Housework in marital and nonmarital households. *American Sociological Review, 59,* 327-347.

Sprecher, S., & Hendrick, S. S. (2004). Self-disclosure in intimate relationships: Associations with individual relationship characteristics over time. *Journal of Social & Clinical Psychology, 23,* 857-877.

Stafford, L., & Canary, D. J. (1991). Maintenance strategies and romantic relationship type, gender, and relational characteristics. Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 8, 217-242.

Stafford, L., Dainton, M., & Haas, S. (2000). Measuring routine and strategic relational maintenance: Scale revision, sex versus gender roles, and the prediction of relational characteristics. *Communication Monographs, 67,* 306-323.

Stark, C. (1999). *A dog is not a gun: Observations on K9 policing.* Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd.

Stark(-Adamec), C. (1995, June). *The impact of shiftwork on workers and their families: A shift away from blaming the victim.* Paper presented at the annual Canadian Psychological Association Convention, Charlottetown, P.E.I.

Steil, J. M. (2001). Contemporary marriage: Still an unequal partnership. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 125-136). London: Sage.

Steil, J. M., & Weltman, K. (1991). Marital inequality: The importance of resources, personal attributes, and social norms on career valuing and the allocation of domestic responsibilities. *Sex Roles, 24,* 161-179.

Stolwerk, M. (1990). How may police women in Europe combine a career with family responsibilities? *Women Police, 24, 2,* 28-30.

Stone, V. (1999). *Cops don't cry: A book of help and hope for police families.* Ontario: Creative Bound.

Stratton, J. (1975). Pressures on law enforcement marriages: Some considerations. *The Police Chief, November,* 44-47.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2nd Ed.). London: Sage.

Swann, W. B. Jr.; Rentfrow, P. J., & Gosling, S. D. (2003). The precarious couple effect: Verbally inhibited men + critical, disinhibited women = bad chemistry. *Journal of Personality & Social Psychology, 85(6),* 1095-1106.

Terry, W. (1981). The empirical evidence. *Journal of Police Science and Administration, 9,* 61-75.

Tesch, R. (1990). *Qualitative research: Analysis types and software tools.* New York: The Falmer Press.

Thompson, B., Kirk-Brown, A., & Brown, D. (2001). Women police: The impact of work stress on family members. In P. A. Hancock & P. A. Desmond (Eds.), *Stress, workload, and fatigue: Human factors in transportation* (pp. 200-210). Mahwah, N. J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Thornton, A., & Young-DeMarco, L. (2001). Four decades of trends in attitudes toward family issues in the United States: The 1960s through the 1990s. *Journal of Marriage & the Family, 63,* 1009-1037.

Trovato, F. (2000). The probability of divorce in Canada, 1981-1995. *Canadian Studies in Population, 27,* 231-238.

Vaillant, C. O., & Vaillant, G. E. (1993). Is the U-curve of marital satisfaction an illusion? A 40-year study of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 55,* 230-239.

Violanti, J. M. (1993). Coping strategies among police recruits in a high-stress training environment. *Journal of Social Psychology, 132,* 717-729.

Violanti, J. M., & Aron, F. (1995). Police stressors: Variations in perception among police personnel. *Journal of Criminal Justice, 23,* 287-294.

Weigel, D., & Ballard-Reisch, D. (1999a). How couples maintain marriages: A closer look at self and spouse influences upon the use of maintenance behaviors in marriages. *Family Relations*, 48, 263- 269.

Weigel, D. J., & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (1999b). Using paired data to test models of relational maintenance and marital quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 16,* 175-191.

Weigel, D. J., & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (2001). The impact of relational maintenance behaviours on marital satisfaction: A longitudinal analysis. *Journal of Family Communication, 1,* 265-279.

Weigel, D. J., & Ballard-Reisch, D. S. (2002). Investigating the behavioral indicators of relational commitment. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships, 19,* 403-423.

Wenzel, A., & Harvey, J. (2001). Introduction: The movement toward studying the maintenance and enhancement of close romantic relationships. In J. H. Harvey & A. Wenzel (Eds.), *Close romantic relationships: Maintenance and enhancement* (pp. 1-10). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Wester, S. R., & Lyubelsky, J. (2005). Supporting the thin blue line: Gender-sensitive therapy with male police officers. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 36,* 51-58.

Westman, M. (2001). Stress and strain crossover. *Human Relations, 54,* 717-751.

White, L., & Keith, B. (1990). The effect of shift work on the quality and stability of marital relations. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 52,* 453-462.

Williams, K. J., & Alliger, G. M. (1994). Role stressors, mood spillover, and perceptions of work-family conflict in employed parents. *Academy of Management Journal, 37,* 837-868.

Winter, G. (2000). A comparative discussion of the notion of 'validity' in qualitative and quantitative research. The Qualitative Report, 4, http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR4-3/winter.html.

Wood, J. T. (2000). Gender and personal relationships. In C. Hendrick & S. Hendrick (Eds.), *Close relationships: A sourcebook* (pp. 301-313). London: Sage.

Zaccaro, S. J., Craig, B., & Quinn, J. (1991). Prior absenteeism, supervisory style, job satisfaction, and personal characteristics: An investigation of some mediated and moderated linkages to work absenteeism. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes, 50,* 24-44.

APPENDIX A

Table of Contents

UNIVERSITY OF REGINA

OFFICE OF RESEARCH SERVICES

DATE: August 7, 2002

TO: Jody Carrington

FROM: Paul Gingrich, REB Chair

Re: Elements of and Strategies for 'Successful' Police Marriage: The Lived Perspectives of Police Officers and Their Spouses

---

Please be advised that the University of Regina Research Ethics Board has reviewed your proposal and found it to be:

__x__ 1. ACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. Only applicants with this designation have ethical approval to proceed with their research as described in their applications. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* requires the researcher to send the Chair of the REB annual reports and notice of project conclusion for research lasting more than one year (Section 1F). **ETHICAL CLEARANCE MUST BE RENEWED BY SUBMITTING A BRIEF STATUS REPORT EVERY TWELVE MONTHS. CLEARANCE WILL BE REVOKED UNLESS A SATISFACTORY STATUS REPORT IS RECEIVED.**

_____ 2. ACCEPTABLE SUBJECT TO CHANGES AND PRECAUTIONS (SEE ATTACHED). **Changes must be submitted to the REB and subsequently approved prior to beginning research. Please address the concerns raised by the reviewer(s) by means of a supplementary memo to the Chair of the REB. Do not submit a new application. Once changes are deemed acceptable, approval will be granted.**

_____ 3. UNACCEPTABLE AS SUBMITTED. **Please contact the Chair of the REB for advice on how the project proposal might be revised.**

Paul Gingrich, REB Chair

c.c. Cannie Stark, supervisor
Psychology

REGINA, SASKATCHEWAN, CANADA S4S 0A2 PHONE: (306) 585-4775 FAX: (306) 585-4893
E-MAIL: research.services@uregina.ca WEB-SITE: http://www.uregina.ca/research/index.html

msn® Hotmail®

jodycarrington@hotmail.com Printed: October 21, 2005 9:39:35 AM

From : Curt Tugnum <Curt.Tugnum@rcmp-grc.gc.ca>
Sent : October 30, 2002 5:39:54 PM
To : <jodycarrington@hotmail.com>
Subject : Re: police marriage study

As you know, your project has been fully discussed with me and I supported your proposal. I see your project to have significant and positive value to our organization. Please consider this message as my formal and written consent to conduct your research and prepare the required dissertation and written material based on the results of this research. I fully appreciate that your proposal has been presented to the appropriate academic committees and that you have their approval and that you will abide by the ethical and academic guidelines set out by the University.

Curt Tugnum

>>> "Jody Carrington" <jodycarrington@hotmail.com> 02-10-30 >>>

Good afternoon Sir,
As you will recall, Dr. Roy and I met with you two weeks ago regarding my dissertation project in which I will be looking at the components of "successful" police marriages. I was pleased to have met with you and was delighted to have your approval of the project.
After our meeting, I realised that The Research Ethics Board at the University of Regina requires me to have written approval from you acknowledging that we met and that you have approved this research endeavour. A response to this email would suffice.
Please let me know if you have any further questions about the project. As we discussed in our meeting, you will be provided with a summary report once the research is completed.
Kindest regards,
Jody Carrington

Jody Carrington, M.A.
Ph.D. Student
Department of Psychology
University of Regina
Regina, Saskatchewan
S4S 0A2
(306) 585-5326cc: Dr. Cannie Stark (dissertation supervisor)

APPENDIX B

Table of Contents

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

I. DEMOGRAPHICS AND MARITAL HISTORY
[both police officer and spouse interviews]

➢ Number of times married
➢ Number of years married (total/current)
➢ Married before or after you/your partner became a police officer
➢ Dual earner couple? ➢ Characteristics of spouses' job
➢ Children?
➢ Physical health
➢ Approximate Age

II. POTENTIAL GUIDING QUESTIONS

Spouse Interview

Experience of being a police spouse
1. What is the best part about being married to a police officer?
2. What is the worst part about being married to a police officer?
3. Some people have said that there is a higher rate of divorces among police couples. Has this been your observation?
Perspectives regarding support from the Force
4. In what ways is the Force supportive of families?
5. What are your thoughts about ways in which the Force could or should be more supportive of families?
Coping with aspects of police work
6. What kind of an impact has the job had on your marriage?
7. The RCMP often requires considerable loyalty to the Force. What kind of an impact on your relationship has the 'loyalty-to-the-Force' requirement had?
8. Communication has been found to be an important aspect of relationships. Police officers are often trained to communicate by "getting information" rather than "sharing information". How has this type of communication style impacted your marriage?
9. At times police work can be dangerous. How have you coped with this?
10. Some people find living with someone who works shiftwork easy and others find it difficult. What impact has shiftwork had on your relationship?
11. What kinds of strategies have you found helpful in accommodating the demands of shiftwork?
12. Work often has an effect on the social life of couples. What kind of an effect has your spouse's job had on your social life?
13. It has been suggested that families can become targets for the stress at work. When your spouse has "brought the job home" what impact has this had on your marriage?
14. Some couples often "bring their work home" and others try to keep work and home very separate. How do you and your partner manage it when work issues are brought up at home?

15. How do you feel about your spouse discussing work issues with you at home?
16. Sometimes when people are in "highly visible" jobs, the public can be more critical of you. How have you dealt with public scrutiny?
17. How have you learned to cope with the "stressful parts" of being married to a police officer?
Coping with Aspects of long-term relationships
18. Most long-term relationships go through some 'rough patches' when, sometimes, the option of divorce seems very attractive. How have you gotten through these 'rough patches'?"
What could be done to make the role of a police spouse easier?
19. There are mixed reviews concerning the degree to which spouses of police officers should be "involved" in police work. To what degree do you feel spouses should be included (e.g., involvement in Critical Incident Debriefings after a major incident, firearms training, ride-outs with police officers)?
20. What do you think could be done to make the role of a police spouse easier?
21. In what ways do police spouses support each other?
What would be helpful for police spouses to know?
22. Knowing what you know now as the spouse of a police officer, what would you have done differently?
23. What would be your best advice to a new spouse of a police officer in terms of having a successful police marriage?

Officer Interview

Experience of being a married police officer
1. What is the best part about being a married police officer?
2. What is the worst part about being a married police officer?
3. What do you think are the downsides for your spouse, being married to a police officer?
4. In what ways do you think police work has had an impact on your marriage?
5. Some people have said that there is a higher rate of divorces among police couples. Has this been your observation?
Perspectives regarding support from the Force
6. In what ways is the Force supportive of Members and their families?
7. How do you think the Force could be more supportive of you, as a married police officer?
8. How do you think the Force could be more supportive of your spouse?
Coping with and separating police work from home life
9. In what ways do you think police work has had an impact on your marriage?
10. Communication has been found to be an important aspect of relationships. Police officers are often trained to communicate by "getting information" rather than "sharing information". What impact has this type of communication style had on your marriage?
11. How have you dealt with the times when you have had to "shut out" your partner because there were some things you could not tell her/him?
12. How does "home life" affect you at work?
13. It has been suggested that families can become targets for the stress at work. When you have "brought the job home" what impact has this had on your marriage?
14. Some people find living with someone who works shiftwork easy and others find it difficult.

What impact has shiftwork had on your relationship?
15. What kinds of strategies have you found helpful in accommodating the demands of shiftwork?
16. Work often has an effect on the social life of couples. What kind of an effect has your job had on your social life?
17. What would you say are some effective ways that you and your spouse have learned to deal with the stressors of police work?
Coping with Aspects of long-term relationships
18. Most long-term relationships go through some 'rough patches' when, sometimes, the option of divorce seems very attractive. How have you gotten through these 'rough patches'?"
What could be done to make balancing roles as a police officer and spouse easier?
19. What are some initiatives that the Force can undertake to make it easier for officers to balance home and work life?
20. To what degree do you think spouses of police officers should be involved in police work (e.g., involved in Critical Incident Stress Debriefings, have firearms training, or be involved in ride-outs)?
What would be helpful for married police officers to know?
21. Knowing what you know now, as a married police officer, what would you have done differently?
22. What would be your best advice to a newly married police officer in terms of having a successful police marriage?

APPENDIX C

Table of Contents

(On Letterhead)

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION BY CURRENT RCMP MEMBERS AND RCMP SPOUSES IN POLICE MARRIAGE RESEACH STUDY

Information Sheet

Although there has been a lot of research on marriage, and some research on police marriages, the focus has been primarily on risk factors for divorce. As a result, there is very little understanding of what makes for a 'successful' marriage (or long-term relationship)—especially in the policing context. We are inviting Members and 'spouses' (including common-law partners) to participate in research aimed at exploring the effects of police work on police marriages/long-term relationships.

What this research is **not:** This research is not an attempt to evaluate or pass judgement about your relationships. There are also no tests or questionnaires for you to fill out. This research is not under contract to or commissioned by anyone. It was not initiated in any way by the RCMP; although we do have their permission and support; it is all our initiative.

What this research **is:** This project is aimed at gaining a better understanding of what makes a police marriage work, from those who understand it best. In order to make recommendations that would serve to promote the health and longevity of police marriages, it is first necessary to have a better understanding, from your perspective, of what is important in maintaining an enduring relationship within the police context. This research will be used as part of Jody Carrington's dissertation requirement (The Elements of and Strategies for 'Successful' Police Marriage: The Lived Perspective of Police Officers and Their Spouses).

What would be involved? Participation would involve an ***interview*** that would take approximately 1 hour, or as much time as is convenient for you. Specifically, the purpose of the interview will be to hear your experiences of being involved in a police marriage, and how you have learned to deal with the complexities of police life.

Who we would like to interview: RCMP Members (male *or* female) and RCMP spouses (female *or* male) who are in a heterosexual relationship are encouraged to participate.

How to volunteer: If you and/or your spouse would like to participate, we will schedule separate interviews at your earliest convenience. After the interview, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript and can make any additions, changes, or deletions at any time. In addition, a summary of the results of the study will be forwarded to each of you for your feedback. Only the researchers will have access to the *original* data of the study.

This project does have approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB). If you have any questions about the ethics of this research, feel free to contact the REB at 585-4775, or by e-mail at research.ethics@uregina.ca. You are under NO obligation to participate in this study. Participation is **voluntary** and **completely anonymous.**

We would really appreciate your perspective on your experience in a police marriage. If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact, in confidence:

Jody Carrington, M.A. Doctoral Candidate Department of Psychology University of Regina Regina, SK S4S 0A2 Phone: (306) 585-5326 email: Carringj@uregina.ca	OR	**Dr. Cannie Stark (Supervisor)** Department of Psychology University of Regina Regina, SK S4S 0A2 Phone: (306) 585-5268 email: cannie.stark@uregina.ca

(On Letterhead)

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION BY RETIRED RCMP MEMBERS AND RCMP SPOUSES IN POLICE MARRIAGE RESEACH STUDY

Information Sheet

Although there has been a lot of research on marriage, and some research on police marriages, the focus has been primarily on risk factors for divorce. As a result, there is very little understanding of what makes for a 'successful' marriage (or long-term relationship)—especially in the policing context. We are inviting Members and 'spouses' (including common-law partners) to participate in research aimed at exploring the effects of police work on police marriages/long-term relationships.

What this research is **not:** This research is not an attempt to evaluate or pass judgement about your relationships. There are also no tests or questionnaires for you to fill out. This research is not under contract to or commissioned by anyone. It was not initiated in any way by the RCMP; although we do have their permission and support; it is all our initiative.

What this research **is:** This project is aimed at gaining a better understanding of what makes a police marriage work, from those who understand it best. In order to make recommendations that would serve to promote the health and longevity of police marriages, it is first necessary to have a better understanding, from your perspective, of what is important in maintaining an enduring relationship within the police context. This research will be used as part of Jody Carrington's dissertation requirement (The Elements of and Strategies for 'Successful' Police Marriage: The Lived Perspective of Police Officers and Their Spouses).

What would be involved? Participation would involve an ***interview*** that would take approximately 1 hour, or as much time as is convenient for you. Specifically, the purpose of the interview will be to hear your experiences of being involved in a police marriage, and how you have learned to deal with the complexities of police life.

Who we would like to interview: Retired RCMP Members (male *or* female) and spouses of retired Members (female *or* male) who are in a heterosexual relationship (minimum of five years) are encouraged to participate.

How to volunteer: If you and/or your spouse would like to participate, we will schedule separate interviews at your earliest convenience. After the interview, you will be provided with a copy of the transcript and can make any additions, changes, or deletions at any time. In addition, a summary of the results of the study will be forwarded to each of you for your feedback. Only the researchers will have access to the *original* data of the study.

This project does have approval from the University of Regina Research Ethics Board (REB). If you have any questions about the ethics of this research, feel free to contact the REB at 585-4775, or by e-mail at research.ethics@uregina.ca. You are under NO obligation to participate in this study. Participation is **voluntary** and **completely anonymous.**

We would really appreciate your perspective on your experience in a police marriage. If you have any questions or would like to participate, please contact, in confidence:

Jody Carrington, M.A. Doctoral Candidate Department of Psychology University of Regina Regina, SK S4S 0A2 Phone: (306) 585-5326 email: Carringj@uregina.ca	OR	**Dr. Cannie Stark (Supervisor)** Department of Psychology University of Regina Regina, SK S4S 0A2 Phone: (306) 585-5268 email: cannie.stark@uregina.ca

APPENDIX D

Table of Contents

(On Letterhead)

The Elements of and Strategies for 'Successful' Police Marriage: The Lived Perspectives of Police Officers and Their Spouses

The purpose of this study is to explore the effects of police work on police marriages from the perspectives of those who are involved in police marriages. Primarily, our aim is to get insight about what makes a police marriage successful and get a better perspective on what things might be done to facilitate a healthy marital relationship within the policing context.

Participation in this study is voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at anytime without penalty. Your decision to participate, or not to participate, will have no effect on your relationship with the RCMP. If you choose to withdraw from the study after you have completed the interview, please contact Jody Carrington to inform her of your decision.

We are taking a number of steps to ensure the confidentiality of the identity of participants. First, your own individual interview responses will not be released to anyone, including the RCMP. Second, your name will only appear on this consent form. Only your participant number will appear on your interview data. Third, no research data will be stored on RCMP premises. All data will be stored in locked filing cabinets in the Organisational and Social Psychology Research Unit at the University of Regina. The list of participant names will be kept in a separate locked filing cabinet at the Research Unit.

This project is being conducted by Jody Carrington (Department of Psychology, University of Regina, telephone: (306) 585-5326, e-mail: carringj@uregina.ca), a doctoral graduate student. The project is supervised by Dr. Cannie Stark (Department of Psychology, University of Regina, telephone: (306) 585-4221, e-mail: cannie.stark@uregina.ca). This project was approved by the Research Ethics Committee, University of Regina. If research participants have any questions or concerns about their rights or treatment as participants, they may contact the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee, at (306) 585-4775 or by e-mail: research.ethics@uregina.ca. If participants have additional questions regarding the procedures and goals of this study, they may contact either Ms. Carrington or Dr. Stark.

I consent to participate in this study, and realise that this requires participation in a brief interview. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty, and I have been provided with a copy of this consent form. Furthermore, I understand that all information will be held in the strictest confidence by the researcher.

_____ _____

Participant Name (please print) Participant Signature

Date: _____

(On Letterhead)

The Elements of and Strategies for 'Successful' Police Marriage: The Lived Perspectives of Police Officers and Their Spouses

We would like your consent to audiotape record this interview. The reason for this is that we want to make sure that we are as accurate as possible so the we do not come to irrelevant conclusions and possibly make recommendations that may make things more difficult for RCMP marriages. Your responses will be merged with responses from other interviewees in order to develop a better understanding of what is involved in a police marriage and what your perceptions are that makes this difficult or easy. Your confidential participant number will be put on the tape; your name only appears on the Informed Consent Form and this form and will not be put either on the tape or on the transcript of the tape.

We will provide you with a transcript of your interview so that you can check it for accuracy and make either additions or deletions. After you have approved the transcript, the original tape recording will be erased.

If you cannot give your consent to audiotaping we would appreciate it if you would consent to me taking extensive notes during the interview—once again to ensure accuracy. These notes will be destroyed once you have approved the transcript.

I consent to having my interview audiotaped by Jody Carrington. In addition, I understand that deciding not to consent to audiotaping of my interview does not automatically negate my involvement from this research and that my responses will instead by recorded as hand-written notes by the interviewer. Furthermore, I understand that the audiotape of my interview will be erased and any hand-written notes will be destroyed upon my approval of the transcript interview.

_____ _____

Participant Name (please print) Participant Signature

Date: _____

APPENDIX E

Table of Contents

(On Letterhead)
Letter to Participants who Agreed to Check a Copy of Their Transcripts

[Date]

Dear [Member or Spouse's name]:

As you agreed to, enclosed please find a copy of the transcript of our interview so that you can check it for accuracy. Please read over this transcript and make any changes necessary. I have already replaced identifying statements with more general ones. For example specific names or places were replaced with "(name)" or "(place)".

As we discussed before beginning the interview, you will never be connected as an individual to your particular interview. The responses of all of the interviews will be grouped together to reflect a general sense of what is involved in being in a police marriage. The precautions we are taking, such as removing names and places, are common practices in this type of research—and do not reflect a concern over what was said.

If you have remembered any additional experiences or thoughts about police marriages, please feel free to write this information on the back of the transcript or add additional pages. You do not need to worry about being grammatically correct, feel free to jot notes as if it were a conversation.

When you have finished reviewing the transcript, please return it to me using the enclosed pre-stamped envelope. I would greatly appreciate it if you could do this within 2 weeks of receiving the transcript. However, if at a later date you think of something that should be added or deleted, you can always contact me at that time and I will make the changes.

I want to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your willingness to share your experiences with me and to provide suggestions is greatly appreciated. Once again, if you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jody Carrington
Department of Psychology
University of Regina
Regina SK S4S 0A2
Office: (306) 585-5326
E-mail: carringj@uregina.ca

(On Letterhead)
Letter to Participants who did not Agree to Check a Copy of Their Transcript

[Date]

Dear [Member or Spouse's name],

Thank you again for participating in our interview on [date]. Your willingness to share your experiences and advice with me is greatly appreciated. I have now transcribed the interview (it's [number] of pages long). At the conclusion of the interview, you indicated that you felt comfortable not checking over the transcript.

Please remember that if you would like to make any changes or additions to your interview responses, you can contact me at anytime and I will make the changes. If you have now decided that you would like to see a copy of the transcript, let me know and I will send it to you immediately.

As we discussed before beginning the interview, you will never be connected as an individual to your particular interview. The responses of all of the interviews will be grouped together to reflect a general sense of what is involved in being in a police marriage. The precautions we are taking, such as removing names and places, are common practices in this type of research—and don't reflect a concern over what was said.

I want to thank you again for agreeing to participate in this study. Your willingness to share your experiences with me and to provide suggestions is greatly appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jody Carrington
Department of Psychology
University of Regina
Regina SK S4S 0A2
Office: (306) 585-5326
E-mail: carringj@uregina.ca