

# **The Wellbeing, Family Functioning and Social Development of Adolescents in Military Families**

## **OVERVIEW OF METHODOLOGY, KEY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**



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## Introduction

This document is being circulated less than a month after a productive two-day symposium in Oromocto (March 24 and 25, 2011), at which the research team and its partner, NB School District 17 (SD17), discussed some of the project's key quantitative and qualitative findings, and made policy recommendations. The intentions of these recommendations were to build on existing strengths at SD17 schools and improve the quality of support provided to students from Canadian Forces (CF) families who were experiencing major parental deployments, evidence of parental post-traumatic stress disorder, and geographical transfers.

The rapidity with which we have produced this document means that it is only an **Overview of Methodology, Key Findings and Recommendations**. It is not yet a **Report**, since it contains neither a literature review nor a detailed, reflective, analysis of our findings.

Scholarly papers from the project are in various stages of the publication process; once each appears in print, it will be cited on our website, <http://www.unb.ca/youthwellbeing/>.

In this **Overview**, our findings have been presented in a 'facts only' way, which was intended to provoke useful discussion during the symposium. In the same manner, we would welcome feedback from readers, and the sharing of their own experiences with (or as) military adolescents.

This document remains a work in progress, which would benefit from your input. Please address your comments to Deborah Harrison at [harrison@unb.ca](mailto:harrison@unb.ca).

We hope that, between the lines of the 'facts' in this document, some of the courage, resilience, and wisdom of the CF adolescents at Oromocto High School will be conveyed to you. Our lives have been transformed by the privilege of the conversations they permitted us to have with them.

Finally, the enthusiastic partnership of SD17 has been an energizing and memorable experience for every member of the research team. We will always be grateful for this productive and enjoyable collaboration.

April 7, 2011

## Research Project Background

This Canadian initiative (2008-2011), undertaken by researchers at the University of New Brunswick, the University of Alberta, Ryerson University, and York University, was funded by the Standard Research Grants program of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The project's organizational collaborator and partner was New Brunswick School District 17.

This initiative represents virtually the first research to be undertaken on the adolescent children of Canadian Forces (CF) members; its ultimate objective is to discover what is unique about military adolescents' transitions to adulthood. Its medium term objectives have been to:

1. compare adolescents from military families with their civilian peers (a) at the same high school, and (b) nationally
2. begin uncovering how the stressors of military life are related to adolescents' wellbeing, family functioning and social development
3. begin discovering the conditions under which CF adolescents are best able to flourish and thrive, amidst the stressors of CF life
4. offer policy recommendations which will help School District 17 to improve its responsiveness to the needs of the civilian members of CF families.

Schools, often the only links that geographically mobile military youth manage to establish with local communities, have necessarily assumed an enhanced role in many CF children's lives; schools may also assume heightened importance in the lives of youth whose parents are directly participating in an overseas mission, or who are preoccupied with mitigating the impact of the mission on the larger military community. Despite possessing little knowledge of how to meet the new needs of their CF students, schools serving CF families have been required to develop detailed plans for responding to the difficulties created by the Afghanistan deployments. The need for information that would lead to improved support and services to CF adolescents prompted School District 17 to enter into a research partnership with our team.

## The Research Team

### Deborah Harrison, Project Leader and Principal Investigator

Deborah Harrison is Professor (retired) and Adjunct Professor of Sociology at the University of New Brunswick in Fredericton, and a former Director of UNB's Muriel McQueen Fergusson Centre for Family Violence Research. She is also Professor (Status Only) of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto.

Dr. Harrison is a former member of the Canadian Forces Advisory Council to Veterans Affairs Canada, an External Associate of the Centre for International and Security Studies at York University, and a member of the Inter-University Seminar on Armed Forces and Society.

She is the author (with Lucie Laliberté) of **No Life Like It: Military Wives in Canada** (Lorimer, 1994) and author (with seven collaborators) of **The First Casualty: Violence Against Women in Canadian Military Communities** (Lorimer, 2002).

### Patrizia Albanese, Co-Investigator

Patrizia Albanese is Associate Professor of Sociology at Ryerson University, who conducts research on families under stress. She is the author of **Youth and Society** (Oxford, 2011), **Mothers of the Nation** (U of T Press, 2006), **Children in Canada Today** (Oxford, 2009), and **Child Poverty in Canada** (Oxford, 2011).

### Rachel Berman, Co-Investigator

Rachel Berman is Associate Professor of Early Childhood Education and the Co-Director of the Centre for Research on Children, Youth and Families at Ryerson University. She is the author of numerous articles on children and youth.

### Christine Newburn-Cook, Co-Investigator

Christine Newburn-Cook is a Professor and clinical epidemiologist in the Faculty of Nursing at the University of Alberta, where she is also the Associate Dean of Research. She is a mentor for the CIHR Strategic Training Program in Maternal-Fetal-Newborn Health Research, and a member of Information Management and Health Technology Assessment Committees of the Alberta Perinatal Health Program. Dr. Newburn-Cook has been a CF naval reserve officer since 1974.

### Karen Robson, Co-Investigator

Karen Robson is Assistant Professor of Sociology at York University, with interests in longitudinal research, the accumulation of human, social, and cultural capital over the life course, and the correlates of young parenthood. She is author (with Lawrence Neuman) of **The Basics of Social Research** (First Canadian Edition, Pearson Education, 2008) and **Stata Survival Manual** (McGraw-Hill, 2009).

### **Lucie Laliberté, Collaborator**

Lucie Laliberté is a lawyer with Family and Children's Services in St. Catharines, Ontario. She is a co-author (with D. Harrison) of **No Life Like It: Military Wives in Canada**, and first collaborator of **The First Casualty: Violence Against Women in Canadian Military Communities** (authored by D. Harrison). She is Founder and President of the Canadian Organization of Spouses of Military Members (OSOMM), and a former member of the Canadian Forces Advisory Council to Veterans Affairs Canada. Lucie is the mother of five children, one of whom is a CF member.

### **Margaret Malone, Collaborator**

Margaret Malone is Associate Professor, Daphne Cockwell School of Nursing, Ryerson University. She co-leads the Nursing Centre for Research and Education on Violence Against Women and Children at Ryerson, and is a member of a new Canadian Public Health initiative, Prevention of Violence Canada (POVC).

### **David McTimoney, Collaborator**

David McTimoney is the Superintendent of Schools in New Brunswick's School District 17, Oromocto. He has served as a Learning Specialist in Professional Development and High School Programs and worked at Oromocto High School for 8 of the last 11 years as a teacher, departmental leader, vice-principal and acting-principal.

### **Mary Mesheau, Collaborator**

Mary Mesheau is a former school and district administrator in School District 17 Oromocto, and is currently a Teaching Associate in the School of Graduate Studies, UNB. Mary is also a facilitator, mediator and trainer in the education and private sectors.

### **Jennifer Phillips, Site Coordinator**

Jennifer Phillips is a business consultant, senior facilitator and project manager with over twenty years of organizational development, marketing, training and consulting experience. She grew up in a CF family.

### **Angela Deveau, Research Assistant**

Angela Deveau (whose father is a retired CF member) is a doctoral candidate in Women's Studies at York University, who has recently completed a feminist political economy analysis of Canada's 2010 Federal Budget. Her work experience includes Case Management Assistant for the Province of Nova Scotia's Department of Community Services (Social Assistance Division), and Community Development Coordinator for the Victorian Order of Nurses/Help the Aged project in Fredericton.

### **Danielle Lafond, Research Assistant**

Danielle Lafond is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at York University who grew up in a CF family, living at CFBs Moose Jaw, Borden, and Shearwater. She is the founder of two registered Canadian charities, and she works with marginalized and at-risk youth in Toronto where she leads programs which promote active and engaged citizenship through the arts.

**Chris Sanders, Research Assistant**

Chris Sanders is a doctoral candidate in Sociology at York University, with interests in health and illness and research methodology. His doctoral research concerns the effects of the criminalization of HIV transmission/exposure upon people living with HIV/AIDS. He once served a four-year enlisted tour in the US Navy.

**Riley Veldhuizen, Research Assistant**

Riley Veldhuizen is a recent criminology honours graduate from St. Thomas University. She holds research positions at St. Thomas University, and sits on the Board of Directors for AIDS NB, while heading the Youth Advisory Committee and the Needle Exchange Program. She has a brother who belongs to the CF.

Over 50 research assistants were involved in the survey and interview tasks of this project.

## Study Methodology

### The Survey

On October 7 2008, our research team surveyed students at Oromocto High School (OHS) during Period One. We obtained surveys from 1066 students out of a total enrolment of 1219. Our questionnaire was constructed primarily from an ongoing study of youth that has been carried out by Statistics Canada since the mid-1990s -- the National Longitudinal Survey of Children and Youth (NLSCY). The NLSCY collects data on various aspects of psychological wellbeing, family functioning, attitudes toward school, and peer relationships from young people in Canada. A major advantage of using the questionnaire items from the NLSCY was that it would allow our survey results to be compared to those from Statistics Canada's nationwide sample. We used the questionnaire items from the 7th (2006-07) cycle of the NLSCY. The survey had been constructed by Karen Robson, assisted by Deborah Harrison and Patrizia Albanese. It can be found on our website, on the same tab as this **Overview**.

All OHS students had been informed of the survey and invited to participate. An information package had been sent to parents and students that had included a supportive letter from the principal, along with a 'dissent' form, which the parent (or student aged 16 or over) had been asked to complete and return to the school if s/he did not want (his/her child) to participate.

Youth for whom the school had received no dissent form, who were present on the day of the survey, and who signed a consent form indicating that they (or, if applicable, their parents) had read and understood the information that had been sent home, completed the survey. Several students who had come to school intending to fill out the survey did not do so, by virtue of admitting to the research assistant that they had not shown the information package to their parents.

The project funded a supply teacher replacement, to enable an extra counsellor to be available in the guidance office, in the event of students wishing to debrief after filling out the survey. A tear-out sheet listing counselling resources (inside and outside the school) was also included with the survey and discussed by each research assistant.

The tasks of recruiting, training, and organizing the 47 research assistants for the survey were carried out by Deborah Harrison, Jennifer Phillips, David McTimoney, Patrizia Albanese, and Mary Mesheau. The survey data entry was organized and supervised by Christine Newburn-Cook of the University of Alberta. The data, once entered, were analyzed by Karen Robson and Chris Sanders.

### The Interviews

During the fall/winter of 2009/10, we conducted semi-structured two-hour interviews with 61 of the OHS students from Canadian Forces (CF) families. We recruited the 61 participants by inviting all the students who participated in the survey to volunteer by filling out the contact sheets attached to their surveys. From the pool of volunteers, we constructed a sample, consisting of 15 'CF adolescents' (see below) from each grade (16 from Grade Nine), with gender divisions reflecting our volunteer pool demographics, and an attempt to include youth with parents representing all ranks, and both regular and reservist status.



Since the interviews were carried out a year following the survey, they were with students who, when interviewed, were in Grades Ten, Eleven, Twelve, and recently graduated.

We interviewed 35 girls and 26 boys who, among them, had 69 parents who were current or recently retired CF members. Only 16 (23 percent) of these parents were other than current regular members, and all of these 16 parents were recently retired regular members, retired regular members who now worked as reservists, or regular members who had been medically released. None of them had ever been career reservists. Seven (10 percent) of the 69 parents were present or former commissioned officers (captains or above); the remaining 62 (90 percent) were present or former noncommissioned members (warrant officer, sergeant, corporal, and private ranks). This ratio varied from the 20:80 ratio of officers to noncommissioned members that currently exists in the CF. All 69 parents were present or former army members, except for three from the air element and one from the navy.

Jennifer Phillips liaised among the team, interview participants, and OHS, scheduled all the interviews, and safeguarded the interview participants' privacy.

The majority of the interviews were conducted in a secluded room at OHS during the school day. The remainder were conducted during evenings and weekends in a conference room in the medical building across from the hospital. Before the interview, each participant (and his/her parent, if s/he was under the age of 16) had completed and signed a consent form, which was also discussed by the participant and interviewer before the interview began.

The interviews covered a range of topics unique to military life and not covered in the survey, including relocations, deployments, deployment-related injuries, family functioning, the participants' perceptions of the impact of military life stressors on their families and lives, their perceptions of how they and their families had been supported by the school and the local Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC), and their perceptions of their own resilience.

Several counsellors in the area (and the OHS guidance office) had agreed to provide pro bono counselling to participants who identified themselves as requiring it. At the conclusion of each interview, the interviewer raised the topic of counselling options with the participant, and handed him/her an information sheet regarding counsellors and other sources of assistance.

The interviewers had also been trained to respond in the events of participants' tears and other emotions, participants requiring immediate counselling, and participants who disclosed child abuse, family violence, or suicide ideation. A one-day training session for interviewers in late August, 2009, had been organized and facilitated by Jennifer Phillips, with the assistance of Deborah Harrison, Patrizia Albanese, Rachel Berman, Mary Mesheau, and David McTimoney.

Interviewers completed a 'contact sheet' at the end of each interview, as a record of the participant's state of mind and a notation regarding whether counselling had been recommended and/or accepted.

The largest number of interviews was conducted by Riley Veldhuizen; a significant number were conducted by each of Deborah Harrison and Jennifer Phillips. The interviews were transcribed by Blackwell Court Reporting in Fredericton. They were coded and analyzed by Deborah Harrison, with assistance from Rachel Berman and Lucie Laliberté. See Appendix One for our interview schedule.

## The Symposium

A two-day symposium took place in Oromocto on March 24 and 25, 2011, which included most research team members, school and school district representatives and a representative from CFB Gagetown. Symposium attendees discussed study findings, made policy recommendations, and considered strategies for implementation. It was hoped that the symposium would provide useful input into the emerging national dialogue among school boards in CF communities regarding how to improve their services to the adolescents who have been affected by the Afghanistan mission, other deployments and CF geographical transfers.

### Symposium Attendee List

NAME	ORGANIZATION
<b>RESEARCH TEAM</b>	
Patrizia Albanese	Co-Investigator, Ryerson University
Rachel Berman	Co-Investigator, Ryerson University
Deborah Harrison	Principal Investigator, University of New Brunswick
Danielle Lafond	Research Assistant, York University
Lucie Laliberté,	Collaborator
Mary Mesheau	Collaborator
Jennifer Phillips	Site Coordinator, Symposium Facilitator
Karen Robson	Co-Investigator, York University
Chris Sanders	Research Assistant, York University
Riley Veldhuizen	Research Assistant, St. Thomas University
<b>SCHOOL DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVES</b>	
Erma Appleby-Brian	Classroom Teacher, Oromocto High School
Debbie Barter	Classroom Teacher, Harold Peterson Middle School
Iona Brown	School Resource Teacher, Harold Peterson Middle School
Sharon Crabb	Principal, Oromocto High School
Ed Griffin	Learning Specialist for Student Services, School District 17
Marlene Jardine	Guidance, Harold Peterson Middle School
Lisa McIntosh	Resource Teacher, Ridgeview Middle School
Anne Marie MacDonald	District Education Council, and CF captain/logistics officer
David McTimoney	District 17 Superintendent (and Collaborator on the research team)
Erika Nason	Psychologist, School District 17
Gary Nason	Guidance, Oromocto High School
Kristi Nielsen	Student Services Team, School District 1
Robert Powell	Guidance, Ridgeview Middle School
Shanyn Small	Psychologist, School District 17
Alvaretta Smith	Guidance, SD18 - Leo Hayes High School
Lynn Thomas-Grattan	Guidance, Oromocto High School
Angela Thomson	Classroom Teacher, Ridgeview Middle School
Nancy Wall	Principal, Harold Peterson Middle School
Joanne Williams	Guidance, SD18 - Fredericton High School

## Research Findings

### QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

#### Who is a “Canadian Forces” adolescent?

We were interested in examining how adolescents in Canadian Forces families compared to other youth across Canada on a wide variety of health and social indicators. Previous research had pointed to the strong possibility that youth from military families experience heightened stress due to their parents’ jobs, particularly if the parent is deployed. This stress can play itself out in a variety of ways, including lowered mental wellbeing, disengagement from school, and strained family relations. Having survey results from Canadian Forces youth and the national sample would allow us to see if there were important differences between these two subgroups on various social indicators.

We defined a “CF adolescent” as a youth who had at least one parent or step-parent who either: (a) was a regular or reservist CF member; or (b) took his/her release from the regular or reserve CF during the previous five years *and* had been a member for at least four years prior to release. Because our survey sample also included non - Canadian Forces adolescents, an additional comparison between CF and non-CF students within the Oromocto area was also possible. We defined a “civilian” as a youth who had no parents or step-parents who had ever belonged to the CF. Questionnaires completed by participants who had had parents who were previously in the CF but out of scope for these analyses (N=52) were not included.

#### How did we analyze the survey data?

Karen Robson and Chris Sanders performed various statistical analyses on the survey data set, both on its own and together with the Statistics Canada NLSCY data described in the **Methodology** section. They looked at various social and psychological indicators with two major comparisons in mind:

- Were there any significant differences in these social and psychological indicators between CF youth and civilian youth in the Oromocto area?
- Were there any significant differences between the OHS survey sample and the NLSCY national sample?

They also examined if gender played an important role, as some literature has suggested that female youth in CF families face unique challenges that may put them at a higher risk of unfavourable outcomes than their male counterparts, as they are more likely to have to take on domestic responsibilities in times of family crisis. Therefore a third major question was:

- Were there any significant differences between CF adolescent males and females on the indicators that were considered?

The statistical tests performed by Karen Robson and Chris Sanders were used both to compare group differences and to build models that gave profiles of which personal characteristics appeared to be most important in determining the social and psychological outcomes considered here. In order to avoid overstating the role of being an Oromocto area resident or a member of a CF family, the researchers also “controlled for” (in other words, took into the account the effects of) family structure and age when doing the statistical analysis. This is an

important part of avoiding *spurious* or *confounding* effects. Age and family structure also play a large role in determining the wellbeing of young people. It is important to consider these factors, so that the effects of being CF and living in the Oromocto area are not taken out of context. There are simple statistical procedures that easily allow for such adjustments to statistical findings to be made.

### **What did we learn from the survey?**

As stated above, we had three broad questions we were investigating: whether CF youth were different from civilian youth, whether youth in our survey sample were different from youth in a general national sample, and if CF female youth had different outcomes than their male counterparts.

### **Findings pertaining to CF youth**

Contrary to our initial hypotheses, we did not find that CF adolescents experienced a range of disadvantages or negative effects on their overall wellbeing compared to their civilian counterparts. In fact, the CF youth at OHS seemed to be doing “better” than the civilian youth. When the effects of age, gender, and family structure were taken into consideration

- being a CF youth did not impact at all on depression, low self esteem, or suicide ideation;
- CF youth indicated having a strong positive attitude towards school;
- CF youth were less likely to skip school than non-CF students;
- CF youth expressed slightly higher educational ambitions than non-CF youth; and
- CF youth were less likely to have friends with bad habits.

### **Findings pertaining to CF females in particular**

- CF females showed no significant differences from their male counterparts in terms of school engagement, mental wellbeing or personal and family relationships (after accounting for age and family structure).

### **Findings pertaining to our sample compared to the rest of Canada**

- Living in the Oromocto area appeared to be a major factor in explaining our various outcomes of interest, after controlling for age, CF status, and gender.
- Membership in the OHS sample (which included CF subsample and Oromocto area civilians) significantly increased the likelihood of depression, low self esteem, and suicide ideation.
- Living in the Oromocto area had mixed effects on school engagement; while OHS students were significantly less likely to skip school, they were also less likely to participate in school activities than other students in Canada.
- In terms of personal relationships, living in the Oromocto area was associated with poorer maternal relationships and a marginally significant increase in having friends with bad habits.
- Youth in the Oromocto area were also much more likely to have experienced the death of someone close.

We also examined whether being female at OHS had a differential impact on the outcomes we looked at:

- In terms of depression, self esteem, and suicide ideation, the females at OHS were not affected any differently than the males
- Being female and living in the Oromocto area had some effect on personal relationships; OHS females showed a reduced level of sociability, though there was also a slight decrease in having friends with bad habits.
- School engagement and familial relationships appeared unaffected by being a female at OHS.

### **Interpreting our findings**

Many of our hypotheses were not supported. In fact, our results were quite surprising. We found no overall evidence that CF youth experienced any disadvantage on the indicators that we examined when we compared them to civilians at OHS. The other unexpected and major finding was that the OHS sample itself (CF and civilian) was significantly different from the national sample from the NLSCY.

When formulating our hypotheses, we had made numerous assumptions that would have been more appropriate for a school population in a large urban centre, in which the students from military families comprised a *numerically marginal minority*. In a large urban context, the presence of adolescents from military families would have had relatively little impact on the lives of the adolescents from civilian families who attended school with them and comprised the 'majority culture.' Oromocto, in contrast, is a small community (population under 10,000), separated from the nearest urban centre by close to 20 kilometres, with no public transportation linking the two locations.

Oromocto is a single industry town, in which a large proportion of the population sustains some past or present connection to the adjoining army base. At the high school, consequently, adolescents from military families comprise the majority of students, especially if past, as well as present, affiliation with the CF is taken into account. The school and the base enjoy a close relationship.

Many personnel from the Oromocto base have deployed to Afghanistan since 2002, and a significant proportion of these have returned suffering from physical injuries and/or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). From the literature, we know that combat injuries exercise a markedly negative impact on family dynamics. Hence, contrary to the thrust of our hypotheses, the relatively isolated nature of Oromocto and its integrated military/civilian culture may mean that *spillover negative effects* of Afghanistan casualties accrue to *all Oromocto area adolescents*, as opposed to simply the adolescent children of CF families. If so, not only would the failure of our hypotheses to be supported be accounted for, but also the fact that *all* the youth in the OHS sample – military and civilian alike – scored more poorly on mental health measures than their age peers in the national sample.

At this time, such a conclusion is merely speculative. Replicating our survey in another army community that has been affected by the Afghanistan mission would contribute to confirming, or casting doubt on, its validity.

## QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Our discussion of our interview findings must begin with the caveat that 61 interviews cannot be considered generalizable, to adolescents in other Canadian army communities or even to the whole student body of Oromocto High School. However, as virtually the first interviews ever carried out with adolescents from CF families, they represent a useful starting point. Our findings also indicate obvious areas of beneficial future research, and are consistent with recent U.S. qualitative research on adolescents and military life stressors.

The qualitative findings featured in this document have been divided into five subtopics: General Impressions of Oromocto High School, Geographical Transfers, Parental Deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Gender Issues,

With the interview schedule providing a general guide, the interviews were conducted in a relatively open-ended manner. Interviewers were instructed to develop excellent rapport and obtain rich description from participants. Given time limitations, the consequence of this strategy was that every participant did not answer every interview question. This is the reason for the 'Not Discussed' category in many of the charts you will see below.

### General Impressions of Oromocto High School (OHS)

As well as asking participants about the quality of support provided at OHS to students who had recently experienced a geographical transfer or deployment, we asked 37 of them about their impressions of OHS in general. The (quite impressive) results appear below.

Comment	Responded "I agree"	Responded "Unclear" or Not discussed	Responded "I disagree"	Total students Interviewed
OHS is a good school	26	34	1	61

### *Most Frequently Mentioned Positive Features of OHS (out of 37 students who provided general impressions)*

Comment	# of instances
Great teachers	16
Friendly atmosphere	12
Excellent sports and clubs	11
Diversity of subject options	6

On the subject of OHS teachers, one recently graduated girl told us:

*I find the teachers there care more in a way about every student, whether you're new or not. ... They go out of their way to help people. If it looks like you're troubled, whether you're troubled or not, they'll try to untrouble you.*

***Most Frequently Mentioned Feature of OHS***

<b>Comment</b>	<b># of instances</b>
There are many cliques.	<b>23</b>

Participants varied in their attitudes towards OHS cliques. Some disliked the 'cliqueyness' of the school, while others believed that the school's easily identifiable groups simplified the task of finding one's own niche.

***Most Frequently Negatively Mentioned Features of OHS***

<b>Comment</b>	<b># of instances</b>
Drugs	<b>7</b>
Fights	<b>5</b>
The Smoking Section	<b>5</b>

## Geographical Transfers

From the results of our survey, we discovered that ‘Canadian Forces adolescents’ had moved, and also changed schools, more frequently than their civilian peers. Similarly, the chart below indicates that almost two thirds (39) of the 61 interview participants had experienced at least one geographical transfer from another province after the age of six.

	Responded “Yes”	% of Total	Responded “No”	% of Total	Total Students Interviewed
One or more major moves during school career (after age 6)	39	64%	22	36%	61

The following two charts indicate that 21 out of these 39 interview participants had found geographical transfers to be disruptive and challenging to their efforts to find and keep solid friendships.

### *Geographical Transfers and Friends Among Movers*

	Responded “I agree”	Responded “Unsure”	Responded “I disagree”	I was very young, so had few problems	Not discussed	Total students who had moved
I haven’t enjoyed the processes of moving and starting over	21	3	5	2	8	39
[After a major move] I initially found it hard to make friends	10	0	3	0	26	39



### ***Geographical Transfers and Friends Among All Participants***

	<b>Responded “I agree”</b>	<b>Responded “Unsure”</b>	<b>Responded “I disagree” *</b>	<b>Not discussed</b>	<b>Total students Interviewed</b>
Watching my friends move away has been a big problem for me	<b>21</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>61</b>

\* (Note: There is a chance that saying ‘I Disagree’ may also have been saying ‘I don’t form very deep friendship attachments’)

Personal struggles around moves had also been experienced by non-movers. Forty of the entire interview sample of 61 participants were asked if watching close friends move away had created emotional difficulties for them, and more than half of them answered ‘Yes.’ About ten percent (6) of the participants made a point of mentioning to their interviewer that they had moved so often (or watched so many close friends move) that they had decided to stop trying to make close friends.

<b>Comment</b>	<b># of instances</b>
Made a point of saying that s/he has moved so often (or seen so many people move) that s/he has decided to stop trying to make close friends.	6

A recent graduate who had moved to Oromocto from another province made the following comment about ‘non-mover’ students at OHS, based on when she first arrived:

*Since they’ve been there the whole time they have their cliques. ... So they’re less accepting of you because they’ve been together all their lives and they know they’re going to be together all their lives. ... Once you get friends with them, they’re just like everybody else kind of deal. It’s just to start off they look at you like, ‘You’re going to be leaving, so why would I make friends with you?’*

However, a recent male graduate - also, of course, from a CF family - described the moves heartache from the non-movers’ side of the fence, commenting:

*[At OHS] I tried to distance myself from military friends. ... ‘Like, you might move next year - let’s not be friends.’ ... Just to save myself [the] heartache of losing a cool friend.*

A senior non-moving OHS boy gave us a detailed description of the pain of continually making new friends, only to have them move away every couple of years.

From these findings, it would seem that the challenges of military geographical transfers are shared throughout the whole OHS student community, and are not confined to the students who have experienced moves directly.

In contrast, a few participants who had not moved, or had not had the experience of losing close friends to moves, spoke with joy and gratitude about the luck they had had in having been able to retain the same friends for several years. When asked to account for their relatively high self esteem, two girls mentioned this fact as it had applied to them.

The chart below indicates that 13 interview participants volunteered particular strategies for coping with close friends moving away. The most common strategy seemed to be: ‘Make new friends.’

Comment	Making New Friends	Finding a Distraction	“Tightening my boot straps”	Not discussed	Total students Interviewed
I coped with my close friend (or girlfriend/boyfriend) moving away by:	8	3	2	34	61

### ***Geographical Transfers and Sports***

As indicated below, ten of the 61 interview participants made a point of commenting either that moving had made it difficult for them to participate in sports (to be chosen for teams, etc) or, on the other hand, that not moving had enabled them to easily make and keep good friends, because of their constant participation in sports.

Comment	# of instances
Made a point of saying that moving had made it hard to participate in sports, OR that not moving had enabled him/her to easily make and keep good friends because of his/her constant participation in sports.	10

From this feedback, it would seem that participation in sports is important to students, both for itself and for the friendships that are derived from the experience. It would seem, further, that not moving makes participation in sports much easier.

### ***Geographical Transfers and OHS Support***

From the chart on the next page, we can see that only about 20 percent of the interview participants who had moved gave us clear feedback on the quality of support provided by OHS, and OHS teachers, to movers. Their opinions were divided.

	Responded "I agree"	Responded "Unclear" or Not discussed	Responded "I disagree"	Total students who have moved
OHS provides sufficient support to new students	3	31	5	39
OHS teachers provide sufficient support to new students	4	37	3	39

However, from the comments of participants who had moved, teachers who had made themselves available for conversation had been appreciated, as well as teachers who had found them a friend/buddy among established students or given them a map of the school on their first day.

Conversely, one source of frustration, expressed several times, was teachers who were unable to be patient with students who were struggling with the impact of the curriculum differences that exist among provinces.

The chart below contains suggestions from seven participants regarding improved support from OHS.

### ***Suggestions for Improving School Support to Movers***

Suggestion	# of instances
Institute a buddy system	3
An introductory booklet to the area	2
'Just be there to talk to'	2

### ***Geographical Transfers and Resilience***

One question frequently asked of interview participants was ‘Have you benefited from moving around (and, if yes, how)?’ Some participants were not asked the question, and a few of those who answered it replied that they had not benefited from military geographical transfers. However, as indicated below, about 40 percent (or 16) of the 39 movers answered that they were grateful in some way for the challenges military moves had represented.

The most common response provided was some version of ‘I am now better prepared for life.’ For example, on the topic of confronting new situations a recent female graduate told us:

*Everybody’s going to confront it, because you can’t stay in high school ‘til you retire. ... So it’s better that I deal with it now.*

<b>Comment</b>	<b># of instances</b>
Moves have made us stronger as a family	<b>3</b>
Moves have better prepared me for university	<b>3</b>
Moves have better prepared me for the challenges of life	<b>10</b>

## Parental Deployments

The chart below indicates that about two thirds (42 of 61) of our interview participants had experienced one or more recent major parental deployments. ‘Major deployment’ was defined as overseas, unaccompanied posting, basic training, or instructing courses in other provinces at least 50 percent of the time.

	“Yes” Response	% of Total	“No” Response	% of Total	Total Students Interviewed
Major parental deployment in last few years (including overseas, unaccompanied posting, basic training, 50% of time away instructing courses)	42	69%	19	31%	61

As indicated below, of the 42 participants reporting recent parental deployments, 25 (or 60%) had experienced one or more parental deployments to Afghanistan

	“Yes” Response	% of Total	“No” Response	% of Total	Total Acknowledged Deployments
Parental deployment to Afghanistan	25	60%	17	40%	42

### ***Problems Discussed Most Frequently***

The two kinds of deployment problems discussed most frequently by interview participants were **quality of life losses** and **new emotional burdens**. Problems mentioned less frequently, which nevertheless appeared to be significant, were **multiple deployments occurring close together** and **negative effects on school work**.

#### **1. Quality Of Life Losses**

The following are some examples of the types of loss experienced by our interview participants.

- (a) Loss of optimal functioning within the household. The roles usually carried out by the deployed parent were not picked up by others in the household, hence there was a ‘hole’ in household functioning. Examples from the interviews included:

*‘No one helps me with the computer.’*

*‘No one else can break up our fights.’*

*‘There is no humour in the house when he’s gone.’*

- (b) Loss of enjoyable family times (example: dinners, outings). Several participants made a point of mentioning that, partially due to the stresses on the parent remaining behind, the family was too overtasked during a deployment to take time to pursue enjoyable activities together.
- (c) Loss of previous freedoms and comforts (examples: curtailment of extracurricular activities and visits to friends, extra domestic work, more care for younger siblings, less availability of the remaining parent). This was a major loss, reported by most participants who had been affected by deployments. The remaining parent typically worked fulltime, ran the household as a single parent, and was affected by the stresses of the deployment, especially in the case of Afghanistan. It consequently fell to the older siblings in the family to pick up the slack around the house.

Curtailment of extracurricular activities was a significant theme for the participants. It was frequently either necessary for a participant to replace his/her after school activities with care for younger siblings, and/or the remaining parent lacked the time to drive the participant to his/her activities.

Home life was often also less comforting, because the capacities of everyone in the house were stretched. For example, when asked to describe a typical bad day during a deployment, a junior male OHS student replied:

*You're really missing [your dad]. And then you go to school and nothing's really working out for you. ... And then you go home and your mom has to work late, and you have to get yourself a sandwich for supper.*

We will postpone discussion of the extra domestic work aspect of loss of freedom/comforts to the Gender subtopic as, for reasons that will become apparent, it most properly belongs there.

As an exception, a couple of boys reported more freedom during deployments, rather than less (example: a mother who could not control them or was more relaxed with discipline than their father).

- (d) Loss of the only parent the adolescent felt s/he could count on. This was perhaps the deepest of possible losses, expressed by participants who were much closer to the parent who was deployed than to the parent who remained at home. Emotionally speaking, these participants reported just 'getting by' while their deployed parent was away. If the deployed parent was in Afghanistan, the fear that he or she might not come home contained the extra dimension of 'How could I survive in the future if I didn't have this parent?' A few participants experienced a major crisis when their favourite parent was away, for which their remaining parent was unable to provide significant support. One or two participants also reported being parented during a deployment by a step-parent with whom they were much less close than they were with their biological parent.

For example, a senior OHS girl, whose mother spent almost a year on basic training, described her life with her father each day as:

*It was pretty much leave for work, come back for dinner, go to bed, leave for work, come back for dinner. That was it. We didn't really talk. It was just 'Here's your dinner. I'm going to go watch TV now.' ... That was it. I didn't talk to anybody. .. I was really, really lonely.*

A senior OHS boy with a chronically stressed mother whose father was in Afghanistan described how he felt during that time:

*That was basically my only thought during the whole time. 'I want him to come home, you better come home.' Like, he's the only reason why our family stays together. .. [If he didn't come home] it would make things a lot more difficult. Like, I wouldn't be doing sports any more. That would be too much for my mom.*

## **2. New Emotional Burdens**

As well as experiencing quality of life losses during deployments, participants found that their emotional lives became more stressful, for several reasons.

- (a) Worry about deployed parent's safety, including (in some cases) worry that s/he would come home with PTSD.

On this theme, a senior OHS girl, whose father was in Afghanistan, recalled:

*Even though somebody can tell me, 'I'm going to call you at 5:00,' the phone will ring and your heart will drop into your stomach, and it will make you sick because you're always walking on eggshells. And every time the PA goes off, even though you know O Canada's coming on, it makes you feel sick. Like, you feel like you're physically going to throw up. And that's what it's like, every single day.*

- (b) Carrying out extra emotional work for the benefit of others in the family such as
  - a. Taking responsibility for mom's and younger siblings' states of mind
  - b. Diffusing family conflicts
  - c. Ensuring that the family functioned harmoniously during the readjustment period after dad or mom had come home

Some participants reported worrying a great deal about a parent's or sibling's state of mind during a deployment, and believing that it was their job to 'fix' it to the extent that they could. They also reported devoting significant effort to diminishing the frequency of their habitual conflicts with siblings and/or of the squabbles among other family members.

A 'resilience' aspect of this emotional work was that the applicable participants took pride in their accomplishments.

- (c) Feeling isolated. The typical participant felt unable to share his/her problems with the deployed parent because all communication to that parent needed to be 'cheerful.' On the other hand, the parent still at home was often too busy/stressed to listen, or the adolescent did not want to add to his/her burdens. The occasional outcome was excessive self-reliance - the adolescent 'shut down' and stopped confiding in anyone.

On the isolation theme, a recently graduated OHS girl described how OHS students often knew from a peer's withdrawn behaviour that his/her father had been deployed to Afghanistan. She said:

*Kids that I would usually see smiles on their faces some days, the next year if there's like, say, 200 people from Gagetown going and you see that kid maybe with their hood up, or their iPod always in their ears, or never smiling or never answering the teacher, you're kind of like [asking someone], 'Hey, did John's dad go to Afghanistan last year?' [The answer would be] 'Yeah, he's over there right now.'*

### 3. Multiple Deployments Occurring Close together (both parents deployed simultaneously or back-to-back)

This situation occurred very infrequently among the students we interviewed. However, the difficulties they reported sounded significant: e.g., a weakening of their parents' relationship, very stressful post-deployment family re-integrations, and serious communication problems between the adolescent and both of his/her parents.

### 4. Negative Effects on School Work

A few participants noted problems with school progress, and/or the fact that they had 'acted out' in school during a deployment.

#### ***Deployment Support from School and Teachers***

The School District 17 student services team has developed a support program for students that includes protocols and procedures for dealing with deployments as well as peer support groups.

The chart below indicates the affected adolescents' perceptions of the quality of support provided by the school during deployments. 'No' was coded for 'not enough support,' 'too little initiative from the school,' or 'don't know what the school is doing in this area.' Only a third of participants whose parents had deployed discussed the quality of support provided by OHS teachers and, as can be seen, their opinions were divided.

	Responded "Yes"	% of Total	Responded "No"	% of Total	Not discussed	Total Students Whose Parents Had Deployed
School provides enough (and proactive enough) support to adolescents with deployed parents	16	38%	22	52%	4	42
OHS teachers provide enough support to adolescents with deployed parents	7	16%	7	16%	28	42



### ***Deployment Support from the Military Family Resource Centre (MFRC)***

The chart below indicates that only 19 percent of participants who had experienced major deployments had visited the Military Family Resource Centre during a deployment.

	<b>Responded "Yes"</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Responded "No"</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Not discussed</b>	<b>Total Students Whose Parents Had Deployed</b>
Participant or family has had contact with an MFRC during a recent deployment	<b>8</b>	<b>19%</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>42</b>

### ***Other Sources of Support/Self-Esteem During Deployments***

<b>Comment</b>	<b># of instances</b>
'I bonded more closely with friends in the same situation'	<b>12</b>
'I became closer to my parent who stayed home, and/or to a sibling'	<b>9</b>
'I learned better self reliance'	<b>9</b>
'I got rid of stress through sports, art, music, or playing with our dog'	<b>6</b>

Of the 42 participants who had experienced major deployments, 36 mentioned sources of support and/or self-esteem that had sustained them during a deployment, other than the school or the MFRC.

The most frequently mentioned sources were friends who were experiencing (or had recently experienced) the same, or a similar, deployment; the parent (or a sibling) remaining at home; and the participant's pride in the achievement of enhancing his/her self-reliance during the deployment.

## Post –Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

In the military context, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a psychological injury caused by a trauma associated with a war experience, such as combat or captivity.

The most common symptoms of PTSD are

- intrusive recollections of the traumatic event
- avoidance (e.g., withdrawal, psychic numbing, and loss of interest in previously enjoyed activities)
- hyper-arousal such as concentration and sleep difficulties, startle reactions, anger, and outbursts of rage
- anxiety
- severe depression

There is no cure for PTSD, but symptoms may be managed with treatment.

[Source: Dekel, R. (2007). Posttraumatic distress and growth among wives of prisoners of war: The contribution of husbands' posttraumatic stress disorder and wives' own attachment. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 77(3), 419-426]

One of the questions in the Deployment section of our interview schedule was: 'Were there any readjustment problems after your parent came back [from a recent deployment]?' If the participant volunteered information about parental PTSD, the interviewer followed it up.

The chart below indicates that 17, or 40 percent, of participants who had experienced a major deployment reported a father and/or stepfather who was suffering from PTSD. No mothers or stepmothers were mentioned in this connection. Of these 17 participants, 14 reported that their fathers/stepfathers had developed PTSD in Afghanistan (see chart below).

### ***PTSD Among Recently Deployed Parents of Interview Participants***

	<b>"Yes" Response</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>"No" Response</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total Students Interviewed with Parents Recently Deployed</b>
Participant volunteered that father and/or stepfather was currently suffering from PTSD (no mothers or stepmothers affected in this sample)	<b>17</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>42</b>

	<b>"Yes" Response</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>"No" Response</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total Acknowledged PTSD</b>
PTSD acquired in Afghanistan	<b>14</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>18%</b>	<b>17</b>

## PTSD Symptoms Mentioned in Interviews

Most Frequently Mentioned	Less Frequently Mentioned
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Anger issues</li> <li>• Physically violent</li> <li>• Hyper-arousal</li> <li>• Drinking too much</li> <li>• Flashbacks</li> <li>• Depressed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Insomnia</li> <li>• Withdrawn demeanor</li> <li>• Nightmares</li> <li>• Suicide attempts</li> </ul>

The chart above lists the parental PTSD symptoms mentioned by our interview participants; those mentioned most frequently are on the left hand side.

Anger was the symptom most frequently mentioned. For example, a boy whose father had done multiple recent tours told us:

*He'll like wind him up, wind him up, wind him out, and bang, he's off and there's no stopping him. Oh, like he'll destroy things, like break things - that's how angry he gets.*

One incident of reported physical violence had been directed towards a participant. The others had been directed towards objects. None of them had been directed towards a spouse or partner.

### Day-to-day Problems with Family Dynamics

#### 1. Loss of Affected Parent as Reliable Mentor/Friend

Participants articulated a sense of loss when a parent was afflicted with PTSD and unable to give the same parenting attention to them as he had prior to the deployment.

**Boys made comments such as:**

*'He can't drive me to visit my friends any more.'*

*'There is so much anger and violence in the house that I stay away as much as I can.'*

**Girls made comments such as:**

*'He can't empathize with me any more – we're no longer close.'*

*'He yells so loud that I am scared he will hit me.'*

*'His moods are unpredictable – I'm constantly on edge.'*

One girl mourned the fact that when her father went to Afghanistan she was so young that she was now unable to remember the way he was before developing PTSD. She said:

*I don't remember what it was like with my dad there in the morning getting ready for school. I remember him being gone and I remember him now, but I don't remember what he was like before.*

## **2. Parents No Longer Parent as a Team**

A few participants reported that their parents no longer parented together effectively, and that, unsurprisingly, the parenting effectiveness of their un-afflicted parent had been diminished. Their observations on this theme included:

*'My parents are always fighting now.'*

*'Mom stresses me out by constantly threatening to leave.'*

*'Mom is too afraid of upsetting him to start an argument with me.'*

## **3. New Emotional Burdens (most of them described by girls)**

At least two girls admitted to taking responsibility for their fathers' emotions (e.g., 'If I get angry, I might push him over the edge').

One girl shared that she works hard to be patient with her father's depression. Others reported having to 'walk on eggshells all the time.'

One girl described needing to go through a grieving process to mourn the father she had lost.

One girl stated that she is trying to set aside her own pain, in order to be a better support to both her parents.

One girl is considering delaying her move from home to start a career and family 'so that mom doesn't have to be alone with him.'

Several girls reported that they are playing parenting and caretaking roles vis-à-vis both their parents.

This new emotional work has required sacrifice and maturity. At least three girls made a point of commenting that the experience of living with PTSD had helped them to grow up faster than they would have otherwise.

## **4. Secrecy and Isolation**

A significant stigma exists against mental health conditions in army culture. In the first special report on PTSD prepared by the CF Ombudsman, military members with PTSD were described as 'stigmatized, ostracized, and shunned by their peers and the chain of command' as a result of being labelled as 'fakers.'

[Source: Marin, A. (2001). Special report to the Minister of National Defence on the systemic treatment of CF members with PTSD. Ottawa: National Defence and Canadian Forces]

Several undesirable implications of this stigma against mental health conditions had emerged for our interview participants.

First, the parent's understandable reluctance to seek help for his symptoms had created extra stress for his spouse and children.

Second, a few participants were motivated to be secretive (and therefore unsupported) at school and in the community, so as not to ‘get dad in trouble.’

Third, there seemed to be a reluctance to seek support from friends (even other children of CF members), because of a belief that ‘they wouldn’t understand.’

Fourth, participants tended to invite their friends home less often because of embarrassment about their fathers’ symptoms.

A couple of participants voiced the belief that, outside of their families, they had become ‘all alone’ since their father’s or stepfather’s return from the deployment.

### **Sources of Support for Parental PTSD**

The chart below indicates where, if anywhere, the 17 participants in this situation had found support or guidance. The most frequently mentioned source was the OHS peer support group for children of PTSD sufferers. This group was mentioned in very positive terms by interview participants who belonged to it. Apart from the specific OHS group, several participants noted that support they had received from peers in the same situation had been experienced as more comforting and trustworthy than the support they would expect (or had received) from a trained adult. However, a few participants had been helped by OHS teachers, the OHS principal, the OHS guidance office, or (less often) a psychiatrist or the MFRC. Three participants had either chosen not to seek support, or had attempted to find support and failed.

<b>Sources of Support</b>	<b>“Yes” Response</b>	<b>“No” Response, or not discussed</b>	<b>Total Acknowledged PTSD</b>
Aware of and/or participate(d) in OHS peer support group	<b>5</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>17</b>
OHS teachers and principal	<b>3</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>17</b>
OHS guidance counsellor	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>
Chose not to seek support	<b>2</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>17</b>
Psychiatrist	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
MFRC	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
Tried, but could not find, a counselor with the appropriate expertise	<b>1</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>

On the subject of the OHS peer support group, one participant told us enthusiastically:

*When we had that group and 10 people came into that room, I was like, 'Oh my God, I thought I was the only one who's dealing with this. I never knew.' ... But no, you realize it's on a much larger scale, that there's many people coming home from Afghanistan with post traumatic stress disorder.*

## **Physical Injuries in Afghanistan**

This applied to 3 out of 25 eligible participants, and the injuries were relatively minor.

## **Medical Release from CF (or Prohibited from Deploying) as the Result of a Physical Injury**

During the interview process, 10 participants out of the total 61 interviewed volunteered that a parent or step-parent had been medically released from the Canadian Forces, or barred from further deployments, as the result of a physical injury.

The following were day-to-day problems with family dynamics where medical releases had taken place, as expressed by these participants (mostly mentioned by girls).

- Parent's anger, depression, and crankiness.
- Fewer activities enjoyed as a family.
- A challenged parental relationship.
- Girls protecting their parents by withholding information about serious problems they were experiencing.

Medical releases add considerably to family stress, especially in an army community such as Oromocto, in which physical fitness is celebrated and valued.

We add, as an aside, that, of our 61 interview participants, at least 26 (43%) were living with at least one parent who had a disability, defined here as a physical injury in Afghanistan, PTSD, or a medical release from the CF, and excluding chronic illnesses. Almost all these disabilities had been the result of injuries sustained doing army work. Although no generalizations are possible in this very small sample, this percentage is more than double the 16 percent of children in the general population who live with a parent with a disability.

[Source: [http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability\\_issues/reports/fdr/2009/page05.shtml#\\_5.2](http://www.rhdcc-hrsdc.gc.ca/eng/disability_issues/reports/fdr/2009/page05.shtml#_5.2)]

## Gender Issues

### *Gender and Self-Esteem*

According to our survey results and national comparison data analyses, girls at OHS have lower self esteem than their male counterparts. This is true everywhere in Canada, and the statistics indicate nothing special about the Oromocto area which could explain lower self esteem accruing to girls, as compared with boys.

Below are the boys' and girls' respective answers to the question 'How would you rate your own self-esteem?' You can see that, amongst the 28 participants who answered this question, only one boy admitted to having relatively low self-esteem, as compared with 10 girls.

How would you rate your own self-esteem?	Relatively High	% of Total	Relatively Low	% of Total	Not Discussed	Total Students Interviewed
<b>Boys</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>26%</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>29%</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>35</b>

Next, we turn to the question 'Why do you think your self-esteem is relatively high (or relatively low)?' Twenty-two participants answered this question. The most frequently chosen reason for high self esteem for both genders was 'I don't care what people think of me.' The most frequently chosen reason for low self-esteem among the girls was 'I worry about my appearance.' The following chart (which continues on the next page) indicates participant responses.

Self Esteem: Why do you think your self esteem is relatively high (or relatively low)?	Boys	Girls
'I don't care what people think of me.'	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
'I feel good about myself.'	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
'I don't care what people think of me.'	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>
'I do well in school and have a good group of friends.'	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
'I was the man of the house when dad was away.'	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>

'I worry about my appearance.'	0	4
'Other kids put me down.'	0	2
'I lack confidence when my friends aren't around.'	0	1
'School is so stressful.'	0	1
'I blame other people's problems on myself.'	1	0

The first question about self-esteem we usually asked during interviews was 'The survey you filled out in 2008 showed that girls at OHS have lower self-esteem than boys. Do you have any thoughts on why this might be so?' Participants of both genders provided each of the answers below.

<b>The survey you filled out in 2008 showed that girls at OHS have lower self-esteem than boys. Do you have any thoughts on why this might be so? (both genders provided each of these answers)</b>	<b># Responses</b>
Girls are conditioned to be more obsessed with their physical appearance and popularity.	27
Girls are upset more easily than boys.	15
Girls are victimized by other girls, who participate in bullying and spreading rumours, to bolster their own self-esteem.	12
Boys put girls down.	8
In Oromocto, the army values young men more than young women.	6
Boys are less likely to be honest on surveys about having low self-esteem.	4
There is a sexual double standard (girls who 'cheat' are considered sluts; boys who do this are admired) [Note : Only girls provided this answer]	4



The most popular answer provided by all participants was 'Girls are conditioned to be more obsessed with their physical appearance and popularity.' The second most popular answer was 'Girls are upset more easily than boys,' followed by 'Girls are victimized by other girls, who participate in bullying and spreading rumours, to bolster their own self-esteem.'

Several participants also chose each of 'Boys put girls down' and 'In Oromocto, the army values young men more than young women.'

On the topic of girls being more easily upset, a junior OHS girl commented:

*If a guy gets like shunned by a group like 'Oh well, I'll just go find another group.' But girls take it more to heart. Like, they'll be like 'Oh,' and they'll start to cry and they'll wonder why.*

A recently graduated boy shared a somewhat less sensitive insight into the same phenomenon:

*My mom has always said, 'Never put down a female - never.' And I never have. Because, if a girl thinks they're fat or whatever, they can go on some kind of crazy weight loss thing and, like, hunger themselves.*

About girls bullying other girls, a junior OHS girl observed:

*Some of the girls in our school are ... very, very good-looking and they know they're good-looking. So if you try to talk to them, they're like 'Why are you talking to me?' And they'll be up-front about it. Like 'You're ugly; I'm not. Don't talk to me.' ... They're very cocky.*

One of her peers added, quite poignantly:

*No one can do anything about it because it's not fighting, it's not fists, it's ... verbal. ... Guys are going to ... fight, but girls, it's behind the scenes. It affects the girl when she goes home, it affects her when she goes to the mall, it affects everything.*

Finally, on the topic of the army in Oromocto making things easier for boys, a senior OHS girl observed:

*Girls are having more issues, more stress put on them. They have to do better in school, they have to try and get better marks and be involved in different school activities. They have to go to university and get a good degree or else they're worth nothing. ... Guys can join the military. As long as they play sports and stuff, they're valued.*

## Bullying and Rumours

Many, but not all, participants were asked about bullying and rumours. This topic was not on our interview schedule, but started to become included in interviews after several of the first students we interviewed volunteered that they had been bullied. For this reason, the numbers below may be conservative. Additionally, students who described being bullied in middle school, but not at OHS, were not counted.

### *Bullying Responses*

<b>Bullying Comments</b>	<b>Responded "Yes"</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Responded "No" or Not Discussed</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total Students Interviewed</b>
Made a point of mentioning having been bullied or ridiculed at OHS (or having participated in bullying)					
<b>Boys</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>78%</b>	<b>36</b>

### *Rumours Responses*

<b>Rumour Comments</b>	<b>Responded "Yes"</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Responded "No" or Not Discussed</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>Total Students Interviewed</b>
Made a point of mentioning having been victimized by rumours					
<b>Boys</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>Girls</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>31%</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>69%</b>	<b>36</b>

These charts suggest that girls appear more likely than boys to be victimized by bullying and rumours. In some contexts, the line between bullying and rumours is, of course, thin.

As we saw above, some students made links between bullying/rumours and girls' lower self-esteem.

Few of the 24 participants who had been affected by bullying or rumours answered the question 'How did you manage to overcome being bullied (or victimized by rumours)?' The most common response was 'I shut my mouth and waited for it to end.' The chart on the next page identifies responses to this question.

How did you manage to overcome being bullied (or victimized by rumours)?	# Responses
'I shut my mouth and waited for it to end.'	3
'I learned to accept what it was that was different about me.'	2
'I overcame my eating disorder.'	1
'I was mentored by an older person.'	1
'I stopped being critical of Oromocto (found things to like).'	1
'I got rid of most of my friends – with fewer friends there is less drama.'	1

### ***Response of OHS to Bullying***

Again, the numbers are small, since very few students answered the question 'Was OHS effective enough in putting a stop to the bullying incident that affected you?' Of the 12 participants who volunteered having been bullied at OHS, two replied basically 'Yes,' two replied basically 'No,' and eight were not asked the question. See the chart below.

	Responded "Yes"	Responded "No"	Not Discussed	Total
Was OHS effective enough in putting a stop to the bullying incident that affected you?	2	2	8	12

## Extra Domestic Work Carried Out During Recent Deployments

As noted in the Deployments section above, extra domestic work during deployments comprises an example of a ‘loss of freedom’ for the adolescent concerned. The chart below indicates the numbers of boys and girls who discussed doing extra domestic chores during a major deployment, categorized as care for younger siblings, indoor and outdoor chores, and emotional work (e.g., preventing conflicts or providing support to the remaining parent). For each participant, as many of these categories were noted as applied. From the numbers, it is evident that girls were significantly more active in domestic labour of all kinds, especially care for younger siblings and emotional work.

	Care for Siblings	Chores	Emotional Work (preventing fights, supporting parent)	Little or Nothing	Totals With Parents Who Had Deployed
Boys	3	8	2	2	18
Girls	10	13	10	1	24

Boys reported mainly chores of an instrumental nature, such as shoveling snow or hauling in firewood. A couple of boys actually created extra work for their mothers during a deployment by taking advantage of the fact that the family disciplinarian was absent.

For example, speaking of his father’s last deployment to Afghanistan, one boy confessed:

*We became pretty rebellious towards her, using a lot of profanity at her and stuff like that. Because me and my brother, we think we’re above our mom when my dad’s not home.*

Girls described their chores and emotional work in considerable detail. For example, a senior student recollected her daily life when she was 12, caring for her two younger sisters when their mother was away on basic training.

*I was the mother role now, ‘cause my dad was working. So I got up early in the morning, ... got my sisters ready to catch the bus, ... made lunches and ... got myself ready for school. And then, I would come home after school and ... I had to make dinner and had to make sure the girls did their homework. ... [When] my dad got home, I’d have dinner on the table.*

At the emotional level, another senior girl, whose mother had been on basic training for eight months, described trying to prevent her father and brother from fighting:

*I felt there was pressure. ... When my brother and my dad got into an argument, I felt like I had to resolve it to keep them not fighting. I don’t know why I felt that way, just felt like I needed to do something to make everyone get along.*

A recently graduated girl chastised herself for having admitted to being frightened to her mother when her father was in Afghanistan. She believes that by doing so, she prevented her mother from continuing to lean on her with her own fears. She said:

*I kind of wish that I didn't tell her that I was scared, because then she [wouldn't have felt] stuck. She wouldn't have felt stuck that she didn't have anybody else to talk to.*

A senior girl whose father was away frequently, and whose mother had been medically released from the CF, did not tell her mother for several years that she was being bullied, because she believed that her parents already had enough to deal with.

Along gender lines, there were a couple of conspicuous exceptions, with boys sharing significant emotional work that they had carried out. For example, a senior male student with a depressed mother quietly gave up sports while his father was in Afghanistan, explaining:

*If I need a drive to a certain sport I don't want to ask my mom, because I don't want to make her do that. Because it's not her daily schedule. It's not what she's used to. My dad's used to doing it.*

Another senior boy described taking note of his mother's attempts to protect him and his siblings from her moments of despair during his father's deployment to Afghanistan. He recalled:

*Every once in a while... my mom would be on the phone and I'd walk by her room, the door was closed, and I could overhear her and I could hear her crying. She didn't want to show that in front of us, but I knew it was happening.*

In general, however, the 24 girls we interviewed about deployments performed more work of all kinds, and experienced more stress, than their male peers. They were also aware and proud of their accomplishments. One or two of them regarded their extra work as an opportunity, as opposed to a loss (e.g., 'I enjoyed being in charge').

## Participants Who Intend to Become Regular CF Members

Close to the end of each interview, the participant was asked whether s/he would choose to join the military after graduating from OHS. The following chart depicts their responses. 'I just intend to join the Reserves' was coded as 'No.'

	Infantry/Artillery, Pilot, MP	'Softer' Trade	Don't Know	No, or Only as Backup	Not Discussed	Total Respondents
Boys	6	4	1	15	0	26
Girls	8	7	0	19	1	35

From a gender perspective, these findings are a bit surprising. Although several participants commented during interviews that the army is more welcoming to men, the girls we interviewed appeared undaunted by this consideration, and planned to join the CF in relatively equal numbers as the boys.

## Military Fathers

Finally, how is the male military leader regarded by the adolescent offspring of CF members in Oromocto? No question on our interview schedule addressed the issue of how participants felt about their fathers and the work they did. However, admiration for their dads as CF members was expressed by a significant number of participants (8 boys and 8 girls) in their answers to other questions. These responses were so eloquent that we include some of them below.

### Boys

(Recent graduate) *I don't complain as much as I used to. ... I used to see my dad as bossy and I used to cry and stuff. But now I see him as more of a man, and like a figure. And I try to be more like him. I suck everything up.* [he does not plan to join the CF]

(Senior Grade) *I felt [unprotected] when I was younger and dad wasn't there to help me with problems. But when he was, I felt protected, like everything was going to be okay. ... 'Cause I trust him.* [he plans to join the CF]

(Junior Grade) *I want to be like my dad and grandfather was. I want to join the Royal Canadian Dragoons. I'd like to be armoured. ... I've done the armoured simulators and stuff. It's just pretty cool – dealing with tanks, driving.* [he plans to join the CF]

(Recent graduate) *Him being military, like I see my future as me being military. ... That's what I want to be. I want to serve my country. It's just like the patriotic thing to do, I think.* [he plans to join the CF]

(Recent graduate) *I'm the kid in the family that is insanely in love with the military. ... One thing is that my dad is in it. I thought it'd be cool if I took up his footsteps. Another thing, I think it would be honourable to serve the country, and somebody needs to do it. ... I'm more proud of my dad than I am of a lot of other dads out there, just 'cause of what he does.* [he plans to join the CF]

### Girls

(Junior Grade) *Being in the military family, it's ... taught me a lot about dignity and pride in the country. ... And, yeah, my dad taught me a lot about respect in general.* [she does not plan to join the CF]

(Senior Grade) *My dad ... doesn't consider himself a hero, [but] I do. ... I think they're all heroes. ... And it's a good thing to help people in other countries that need to be free.* [she plans to join the CF]

(Recent graduate) *I always used to love going to the parades and watching my dad march around, especially the promotion parades. You'd see people and they'd be all dressed up. I wanted that to be me.* [she plans to join the CF]

(Recent graduate) *I look towards my dad a lot more, 'cause we'll sit there and we'll talk and we'll fix the truck. ... I've gotten along with my dad a lot more over the years than I have with her. So if I have a problem I'll generally go to my dad before I go to my mom.* [she does not plan to join the CF]

(Recent graduate) *I think I would be a little against my mom if she didn't like the army. Because I'd be like, 'My dad was just over in Afghanistan, he could have died. You could appreciate that a little more.'* [she plans to join the CF]

## **Exceptions**

### **Boy**

(Senior Grade) *I want to be my own person standing out of the crowd. In the military everyone looks the same. You have to get your hair cut short, and ... there's no individuality in it. They work to make you the same as everyone else.*

### **Girl**

(Junior Grade) *You have to be very ordered and organized. And I have this problem with being yelled at. I just can't take it. I tried cadets and I only lasted a couple of weeks. (father has anger issues)*

In analyzing the interview data, we wondered if this special admiration for CF fathers carries any significance that is relevant to gender relations in the Oromocto community. You will also recall from the survey results that OHS students have poorer relationships with their mothers than their counterparts in the national NLSCY sample (although some of our interview participants reported very strong relationships with their mothers).

These ideas are speculative, but the participants' admiring comments about their CF fathers are possible indicators of interesting future research.



## The Recommendations from the Symposium

Our two-day symposium (facilitated by Jennifer Phillips) was comprised of four activities:

- (a) presentations of the project survey and interview findings;
- (b) three simultaneous breakout discussion groups on the interview findings topics of **Deployments, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and Gender Issues**, during which recommendations were generated;
- (c) a presentation to the plenary from the recorder of each breakout group;
- (d) a final plenary discussion, during which recommendations were endorsed (or not) by the whole group, and divided into the categories **Partnerships, Programs and Services; Information Sharing; and Education and Support (Parents, Teachers, and Students)**.

The purposes of each breakout group were to make links between the interview findings (many of which pertained to what participants had been experiencing at home) and CF adolescents' lives at their schools, and to think of ways in which schools in the District could build on their strengths and improve the support they provided. To assist them in making the links, group members were given hypothetical scenarios of CF adolescents behaving in particular ways at school, as a result of what was happening in their families. They were then asked to begin the group discussion by sharing their own experiences with the situations described in the scenarios, or in the interview findings generally. Guided by a general set of questions, group chairpersons facilitated the transition between this sharing and the generation of recommendations germane to the group's topic.

At the final plenary, particular individuals within the School District 17 system were identified as responsible for moving each of the recommendations forward. A few recommendations were reluctantly set aside after being discussed, because they were considered unfeasible. At the end of the plenary, five recommendations were selected as comprising especially high priorities for the group. Several of the recommendations reflected, and attempted to address, the fact that schools and teachers are frequently unaware of which of their students has a parent who is away on a deployment. The recommendations appear in chart form on the pages that follow. Each is colour-coded according to the group from which it originated.

**Group 1: Deployments**

**Group 2: PTSD**

**Group 3: Gender Issues**

<b>CATEGORY: 1. Partnerships, Programs, and Services</b>		
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>ACTION FORWARD</b>	<b>WHO</b>
1.1 Create a Joint Committee of representatives from school districts, MFRC, CFB Gagetown, teachers, parents, and students. Purpose: to oversee and enhance the wellbeing of students from CF families.	Establish the committee.	School District 17 Superintendent
1.2 Expand MFRC 'homework help' program to include high school students.	Make recommendation to the MFRC.	D17 Superintendent
1.3 Add a 'notify school' check box to the MFRC deployment checklist which is distributed to CF parents.	Make recommendation to the MFRC.	D17 Superintendent
1.4 Appoint an employee from each willing school to liaise/share information with the MFRC.	Establish liaison.	D17 Superintendent and principals

<b>CATEGORY: 2. Information Sharing</b>		
<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>ACTION FORWARD</b>	<b>WHO</b>
2.1 D17 organize a booth at every CFB Gagetown Departure Assistance Group (DAG) function, to solicit voluntary information-sharing with schools and teachers about the deployment, as part of each member's pre-deployment checklist.	Make recommendation to CFB Gagetown.	District Education Council (DEC) and/or Superintendent
2.2 Request voluntary information about upcoming deployments from students and parents on annual intake/registration forms.	Add additional boxes to forms.	D17 Superintendent
2.3 Add more multi-media links to D17 websites – e.g., links to MFRC, pamphlets, videos (e.g., "Elmo Misses Parent"), Sesame Street site, books, U.S. sites for military kids and parents.	Update district and school websites	D17

**CATEGORY: 3. Education and Support (Parents, Teachers, Students)**

	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	<b>ACTION FORWARD</b>	<b>WHO</b>
<b>TEACHER EDUCATION</b>	3.1 Revisit the D17 Deployment Binder – update, add post deployment and PTSD information, include information about this research project; include useful information from the MFRC, if possible.	Review annually; liaise with the MFRC.	District Learning Specialist
	3.2 Make deployments and other military adolescents issues part of a Professional Development (PD) day on a regular basis (e.g., with keynote speakers).	Consider PD schedule.	District Learning Specialist
	3.3 Teachers send a personal note to parents known to be affected by a deployment, acknowledging their knowledge of the situation and offering support.	Add this letter to standard protocols for teachers.	D17 superintendent, principals
	3.4 Explore the possibility of school-to-school collaborative support of multiple-child families during deployments.	Share information across schools (e.g., middle school to high school).	District 17 Student Services personnel
	3.5 Provide resources to Grade 10 Personal Development teachers on the topics of (a) Military Deployments; (b) PTSD Information; (c) Stress, Juggling Responsibilities, and Mental Health (including women and domestic labour issues), to help them incorporate these topics into their curricula, should they wish to do so. The idea for (c) came from concern for adolescents' heightened domestic labour during deployments.	Provide requisite teaching resources.	District 17 Learning Specialist for Student Services
	3.6 Include the topic of deployments in transition meetings between schools (at which individual students are discussed by representatives from both schools).	Add to present practice.	D17 superintendent, principals

STUDENT EDUCATION	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION FORWARD	WHO
	3.7 Start a monthly pre-deployment and deployment peer support group for interested eligible students during the school day (possibly including a peer mentoring 'buddy system' component).	Approve as priority.	Guidance
	3.8 Include education/information about all aspects of PTSD, including social stigma and support resources, in grade specific assemblies.	Add to present program.	Principals
	3.9 Enhance 'Buddy Programs' for new students with face-to-face meetings between new students and their buddies.	Add to present program.	Guidance
	3.10 Start/continue PTSD peer support groups during the school day at all school levels.	Approve as priority.	Guidance
PARENT EDUCATION	RECOMMENDATIONS	ACTION FORWARD	WHO
	3.11 Create a resource for parents on how to tell children about deployments (using, e.g., findings from this research project).	Recommend to Joint Committee.	Joint Committee, in consultation with D17 initiator, (e.g., Learning Specialist for Student Services)

## HIGHEST PRIORITIES

The following recommendations were considered highest priorities by the symposium attendees.

- 1.1 Create a Joint Committee of representatives from school districts, MFRC, CFB Gagetown, teachers, parents, and students. Purpose: to oversee and enhance the wellbeing of students from CF families.
- 2.1 D17 organize a booth at every CFB Gagetown Departure Assistance Group (DAG) function, to solicit voluntary information-sharing with schools and teachers about the deployment, as part of each member's pre-deployment checklist.
- 2.2 Request voluntary information about upcoming deployments from students and parents on annual intake/registration forms.
- 3.1 Revisit the D17 Deployment Binder – update, add post deployment and PTSD information, include information about this research project; include useful information from the MFRC, if possible.
- 3.7 Start a monthly pre-deployment and deployment peer support group for interested eligible students during the school day (possibly including a peer mentoring 'buddy system' component).

## Appendix One: Interview Schedule

### The wellbeing, family functioning, and social development of adolescents in military families

#### Semi-Structured Interview Topics

##### Introduction

Thank you for being here. We really appreciate your help with our project.

##### Demographic data

So, tell me a bit about you. You're [age]? Grade \_\_\_?

Do you live in PMQs? Have you lived in PMQs a lot?

How long have you lived in this area? How long have you been at this school?

[If graduated from OHS, get info on what student doing now, how does s/he like it, etc]

Could you tell me a bit about what your dad (or mom) does (or did) in the military? [Ask for elaboration until you really understand what this is]

What is/was [if retired] his/her rank?

##### Weeding Questions

You said you'd been living around here for \_\_\_ years. Where have you lived before this?

[Then go into some **Geographical Transfers** questions]

If no interesting geographical transfers ...

So, your dad (or mom) is a \_\_\_\_\_? Does this mean that s/he goes away a lot? What sorts of trips are they [probe for teaching courses within Canada, six month tours out of the country, etc]?

Did s/he make any long trips that you remember in particular?

[Then go into some **Deployment** questions]

If no interesting deployments...

[Move on to the **School, Family Dynamics/Crises, Gender, and General** questions]

##### GENERAL HINTS:

- a) Use a chronological format when discussing moves and deployments, to encourage participants to provide lots of detail; ask each participant to pick the most interesting geographical transfer, the most interesting deployment, and describe it **in detail**;
- b) Think of the details for each topic as making up a 'story' (or stories) that has (or have) a beginning (or beginnings), a crisis or crises described in detail (e.g. teasing out family dynamics, friends, school), then a resolution (how did you find a way to get through this? - family dynamics, friends, school);
- c) One of the most important things we are looking for is information on resilience. How has this crisis made you stronger? Do you think you are better prepared for \_\_\_ as a result (e.g., university, parenthood)?

- (d) Ask open-ended instead of closed-ended questions as often as possible (that is, questions that solicit description/elaboration, and are unable to be answered with Yes or No);
- (e) Some excellent examples of open-ended questions are ‘and how did that make you feel?’ (‘how did that affect you?’ ‘how did that change your life?’ ‘how did you react?’ etc)
- (f) When you have ‘hit a nerve’ and the participant has become animated about something, keep him or her elaborating on it if it is a relevant topic; don’t sacrifice this ‘flow’ by switching abruptly to something else;
- (g) If you don’t get a full answer to a good question, ask it again in a different way before moving on to something else;
- (h) Always encourage more elaboration on a topic, if there seems to be something else ‘there’;
- (i) The exception to (h) is emotional outbursts that indicate that continuing on this topic would be too stressful for the participant;
- (j) Take care to validate the participant’s feelings and accomplishments;
- (k) Always give the participant your full attention and maintain eye contact - this is MUCH more important than covering everything in the interview schedule.

### **Geographical Transfers**

Think of a move that you remember a lot about.

- how old were you? where did you move from? where to?
- were you living in PMQs at either place?
- start at the beginning: how did you feel when your parents told you about this move?
- tell me what you most remember about it [probe for school, friends, extended family issues, if participant gets stuck]
- [if it represented a change from being in PMQs to being in civilian housing, or the reverse, ask how this made it different]
- did the new school do anything to help you adjust to this move? or not? what?
- did the base do anything to help you adjust to this move? or not? what?
- what was the hardest part of the move, and why?
- [possible follow up] were things ever really tough during this move? how? how did you get through it?]
- how did this move affect your CF parent(s)?
- how did it affect your non-CF parent (if applicable)? [probe for work outside home, friendships, extended family, isolation]
- how did the move affect the relationship between your parents?
- how did it affect any of your own relationships? (e.g., with your mother, father, siblings, friends, teachers)
- what was the best part of the move, and why if anything? [probe for accomplishments and ‘new experiences’ – this is where you may get something on resilience]

### **Geographical Transfers Summary [only for participants who have had at least one significant move]**

- have you benefited from moving around? (if yes) how?
- how have moves affected your friendships? school life? extended family life? your relations with each of your parents? with your siblings?

- have moves affected who your friends have been? thinking in terms of ‘CF’ versus ‘non-CF,’ how would you characterize most of your closest friends? Why do you think this is so? [work into this living in PMQs and/or being in civilian housing]
- how do you think your life might have been different if you had not moved so much?
- [linger on this question awhile – a lot may come out]

### **Geographical Transfers – Everyone**

What has it been like for you living in a community where families are often leaving and arriving?

### **Deployments**

Has your dad (or mom) done a lot of these? How does this relate to what his/her job is in the CF?

Which deployments really stand out for you?

Think of a deployment you remember a lot about.

- where was it to, and how old were you at the time?
- start at the beginning: how did you find out?
- how did you react?
- tell me what you most remember about the preparation [probe for school, friends, extended family issues, if participant gets stuck]
- what was the hardest part of this deployment for you? [linger on this question awhile – a lot may come out]
- did the school do anything to help you adjust to this deployment? or not? what?
- did the base do anything to help you adjust to this deployment? or not? what?
- other institutions, e.g. a church?
- how did the deployment affect your parent who went away? your other parent?
- how did the deployment affect your parents’ relationship?
- how did the deployment affect dynamics in the family?
- how did your life change during the deployment (extra responsibilities? less or more freedom?)
- were there any readjustment problems after your parent came back? [pay special attention to injuries, including occupational stress injuries (PTSD)]
- what was the best part of this deployment for you, if any?
- [probe for accomplishments, school accomplishments, improved family relationships, relations with teachers, friends, siblings, etc – this is where you may get something on resilience]

### **PTSD [if CF parent has suffered from this during a particular deployment]**

- How did you first notice this?
- Did it take a long time for your dad/mom to ask for help?
- [if yes] Why do you think it might have been hard for him/her to do so?
- Was there a ‘tipping point’ that finally caused him/her to reach out?
- What kind of help/support did s/he get from the CF?
- How has your dad’s/mom’s PTSD been hard for you?
- How has it affected your other parent? Your siblings?



- Has the CF provided any support to your other parent? To you and your siblings? [if so, what?]
- What kind of support has OHS been providing? Has it been good enough?
- How has the experience of your dad/mom having PTSD changed you as a person? (if it has)

### **Deployments Summary [only for participants whose parent(s) have had at least one significant**

#### **deployment]**

- have you benefited from the fact that your dad (or mom) went away/goes away a lot? (if yes) how?
- how have your parent(s)' deployments affected your friendships? school life? relations with each of your parents? with your siblings?
- have deployments affected who your friends have been (CF vs non-CF)? (if yes) why do you think this is so?
- how do you think your life might have been different if your parent(s) had not been deployed away? [linger on this question awhile – a lot may come out]
- how do you think your dad's (or mom's) deployment(s) has/have affected who you are today? [another question to linger on]

### **General**

[if it seems appropriate to ask this] Have you ever been depressed as a result of this stress? [if yes] Have you ever, even briefly, thought about suicide?

### **School**

- How have you enjoyed life at OHS? [elaborate on good and bad features; probe for school subjects, relations with teachers, extracurricular activities]
- What makes (or made) OHS similar/different from your other school experiences? [only ask this if participant has attended other high schools]
- Describe a typical civilian kid at OHS, and describe a typical kid from a CF family at OHS (if you think there is a difference).
- Why are they so different from each other? (if they are)
- Have your own friends mainly been CF or civilian? Why? [if this hasn't been answered in earlier sections]
- Having experienced what you've experienced, if you were a teacher at OHS what might you do for students from CF families? [e.g., even if you have never moved, had a parent deployed, or had a parent with PTSD, has the school done everything it could have to support your friends who have been in these situations?]
- What is OHS already doing well for students from CF families?

### **Military Family Resource Centre**

- What does it do to help kids from CF families who are new here? Is there anything else it could be doing?
- How does it try to support families of members who are deployed? What else could it do?

### **Family Dynamics/Crises**

- How do you think being affiliated with the CF has affected each of your parents' lives? Would either or both of them have been very different people without this affiliation?
- Have they both always benefited from being part of the CF?
- Have there been any tough times for either of them? [if so, ask for chronological description]
- How did this tough time affect your dad (or mom – presumably the CF member)? You? Your siblings?

\*N.B. If a parent was medically released from the CF as a result of an accident or illness, please make sure you explore the event thoroughly – impact on parent, family dynamics, participant, etc.\*

- How has being part of the CF affected your parents' relationship?
- How has this all affected you?
- How has your life been affected by your dad's (or mom's) particular job in the CF? [this question will be more appropriate for some participants than for others]

### **Gender**

According to the survey you filled out in October 2008, girls at OHS have less self-esteem than boys.

- Do you have any ideas why this might be so? [if the participant doesn't feel comfortable with this topic, move on]
- How would you rate your own self-esteem?

### **General**

- Do you feel connected with Oromocto or with the Canadian Forces? Or both? Why?
- Would you consider either becoming a CF member or marrying one?
- Do a large proportion of OHS students seem to be joining the CF after graduation?
- [if yes] Are these mainly students from CF families, or from civilian families as well?
- The media very much distort the information about military life received by ordinary Canadians. If there was one message YOU would want to send out about growing up in the CF, what would it be?
- Is there anything else you wish to tell us about your experiences that we did not get to in the interview?

**Thank you very much for your time. Your answers will help us a great deal.**