

**Women in Red Serge:
Female Police Bodies and the Disruption to the Image
of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police**

by

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

in the

Department of History
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Fall 2013

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Female Police Bodies and the Disruption to the Image
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Abstract

The arrival of women in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) in the mid-1970s disrupted the masculine image of a police force that was intimately connected to idealized Canadian manhood and the formation of the nation. Yet, women have been noticeably absent from the historical record of the RCMP, allowing the figure of the heroic male Mountie to continue his dominance in official, academic, and popular histories. Central to these discourses has been the male police body which has been positioned as the only body capable of enforcing the law in Canada.

In contrast, this history argues that between 1974 and 1990, female Mounties renegotiated and resisted the gendered interpretation of the police officer as masculine. In the process, the female police body emerged as a disruptive force that challenged the carefully crafted and longstanding masculine image of the RCMP. Oral narratives reveal how female Mounties rejected male standards of policing that stripped them of their power and positioned them as inferior, rather than equal, figures of civic authority. Instead, female Mounties actively worked to define themselves as equal members of the RCMP on their own terms, challenging ideas about women as the subordinate sex. The alternative policing methods they brought to the occupation contradicted conventional understandings that equated brawn and physical strength with effective policing. In response, men of the RCMP who were opposed to women in the force engaged in a number of harassing tactics in an attempt to reassert their power and control over both female Mounties and the masculine image of the police force.

Keywords: History of Women in the RCMP; Female Mounties; Image of the RCMP; Female Police Body; Harassment in the RCMP; Gender and Policing

To Candace Smith,
for the courage to come back.

Acknowledgements

A number of people assisted me in different but equally important ways during the long period of time that went into the research and writing of this history. First and foremost, I am indebted to the women and men who agreed to be interviewed for this study. They were extremely generous with their time and their memories, aiding me in the creation of a more inclusive history of the RCMP. I want to especially acknowledge the women of the RCMP who trusted me with the intimate details of their lives as RCMP officers. It was not easy reliving memories, painful or not, with a stranger. Many of the women, particularly those who were still working as police officers at the time, took a chance on an unknown historian who they trusted to protect their identities as well as their stories. I have the utmost of respect for them as women and as police officers. Without them, the personal side of the history of female Mounties would remain untold.

I also wish to acknowledge the contributions of my senior advisor at Simon Fraser University, Dr. Willeen Keough. For seven years, she has encouraged, humoured, and supported me as I struggled with issues, theories, and edits. She read through several drafts of this study, and helped me to condense the large volume of material that I had accumulated. Dr. Keough is a strong student advocate and several times she intervened on my behalf when I faced a number of obstacles within and outside the institution. She also pushed me to promote my research and to become more involved in the Canadian historical community. I have valued her advice and direction, and have appreciated the opportunities she has given me. For these reasons, I consider myself very fortunate to have been guided and influenced by such a fine Canadian historian. *Tá mé beannaithe go bhfuil tú mar mo mheantóir.*

Thanks are also due to the remaining members of my supervisory committee. Dr. Mark Leier is responsible for keeping me in the graduate program at Simon Fraser during a particularly bleak period for me while still a Master's student. This work is largely the result of his words of encouragement from that time. As his many teaching awards attest, he is a respected and committed teacher whose love of labour history is contagious. I have appreciated his sense of humour during the editing process, as well as his reminders to me to consider the perspective of the men of the RCMP. Dr. Elise Chenier's comments on the first draft contributed to a much better analysis. I am

especially indebted to her for encouraging me years ago to consider the role emotions might play in the history of the RCMP. My external reviewer, Dr. Jane Nicholas, was instrumental in welcoming me to the Canadian historical community. Her interest in my academic career, and her friendship, were bright spots in the long journey toward completion. Thanks are also due to Dr. Lara Campbell for her insights, comments, and encouragement as my internal/external reviewer.

I also gratefully acknowledge the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada through a doctoral scholarship, and Simon Fraser University through doctoral fellowships and research grants during the last seven years.

Earlier versions of portions of this research appeared in the following publications: “The Greatest Man-Catcher of All: The First Female Mounties, the Media, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 22:1 (2011); “Women in Red Serge: Thirty-Five Years Later,” *The Quarterly* 74:4 (2009); “Women on the Force,” *Canada’s History* (August-September 2011); “Contesting a Canadian Icon: Female Police Bodies and the Challenge to the Masculine Image of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the 1970s,” *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013). I want to particularly thank the editors of *Contesting Bodies and Nation*, Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas, as well as my fellow contributors, for their inspiring comments about the history of women working as police officers in the RCMP. I would also like to acknowledge the seminar participants at the Canadian Committee on Women’s History conference in Vancouver, British Columbia in 2010, for sharing their insightful perspectives on emotions, oral history, and the Virden shootings.

Many people in the RCMP, serving and retired, made significant contributions to this research. S/Sgt. Margaret Shorter acted as my liaison with the RCMP and the International Association of Women Police. Margaret put me in touch with members of the force and kept me up-to-date with current RCMP policies and with developments affecting women in policing around the world. A true friend and a fellow gate-crasher, she encouraged and supported me throughout the entire process. Commr. Beverley Busson offered her enthusiastic support during the early stages of this project and

granted me permission to interview members of the RCMP across Canada, for which I am truly grateful. In addition, Fraser MacRae, Don Klancher, Cheryl Joyce, Ric Hall, Karen Adams, Jane Hall, Dorothy Martinson, Fred Stark, Donna Morse, and Sheldon Boles were instrumental in providing historical information, studies, photographs, news clippings, documents, or in connecting me with their colleagues. I would also like to acknowledge the help I received from the staff at the RCMP's Historical Collections Unit in Regina, Saskatchewan, and the expertise of Sandy Ramos, the former historian for the RCMP in Ottawa, Ontario.

A number of people outside of the RCMP also made significant contributions. I would especially like to thank Col. Doris Toole of the Canadian Armed Forces, not only for her time, but for sharing her photographs with me and filling in the many details that were missing from the history of the first female Mounties. Dr. Nicolas Kenny and Dr. Greg Marquis freely shared references from their own research, and Dr. Rhonda Semple provided me with family recollections of The Honourable W. Helen Hunley. Anne Toews was responsible for inspiring me to consider the role of the media in RCMP history, and for several long but encouraging chats about history and graduate work. Thanks are also due to Maurice Guibord who graciously spent a morning with me as we searched for the gravesite of Kathleen "Klondike Kate" Ryan in Burnaby, British Columbia. I am also grateful to Gladys We, communications officer at Simon Fraser University, for promoting my research to the local media. I am blessed to be friends with Kate Braid, who is an inspiration and a "sister who knows." Finally, Dr. Jack Gaston is the best cheerleader any student could wish for. Jack and Nicole deserve a special note of appreciation for their unstinting friendship and many words of wisdom and encouragement throughout my academic career.

On a personal note, I would like to thank my friends and those family members who have supported me throughout my doctoral studies. Your prayers, encouragement, and interest in my work were reassuring and affirming. Thank you all for understanding that it was the journey, and not necessarily the end result, that really mattered. Thanks are due to my dad, Howard Reilly, for his love and especially for not thinking that it was unusual that his daughter wanted to complete a doctoral degree at this stage in life. The same is true of Twyla and Peter, who were not only sensitive to my time constraints but supported me during the several years it took to complete this research. This study is

dedicated to my grandson Karsten, who still recalls “that nice horse show” (the RCMP Musical Ride) that I dragged him to a few summers ago. And to my granddaughter Naomi, who was very sure that grandma was still going to be in university by the time she got there, and who was excited about attending classes with me. I am so glad that she was wrong. Most importantly, this thesis is dedicated to my husband Vic, for all of the reasons only he knows.

Dicatum in honorem Dei.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

| | |
|----------|--|
| A/Commr. | Assistant Commissioner |
| AM | Administration Manual (RCMP) |
| C/M | Civilian Member |
| CBC | Canadian Broadcasting Corporation |
| CEDC | Clothing and Equipment Design Committee |
| CEWC | Committee for Equality of Women in Canada |
| CO | Commanding Officer |
| Col. | Colonel |
| Commr. | Commissioner |
| CP | Canadian Press |
| CPIC | Canadian Police Information Centre |
| Cpl. | Corporal |
| CSIS | Canadian Security Intelligence Service |
| Cst. | Constable |
| D/Commr. | Deputy Commissioner |
| DSRR | Division Staff Relations Representatives |
| EEA | Employment Equity Act (Canada) 1986 |
| FBI | Federal Bureau of Investigation |
| FLQ | Front de libération du Québec |
| FUW | Canadian Federation of University Women |
| GD | General Duty |
| GI | General Investigations |
| HCU | Historical Collections Unit (RCMP) |
| Insp. | Inspector |
| LAC | Library and Archives Canada (formerly, Public Archives Canada) |
| Maj. | Major |
| MP | Military Police |
| MVA | Motor Vehicle Accident |
| NCO | Non-Commissioned Officer (the rank of corporal, sergeant, or staff sergeant) |
| NCW | The National Council of Women |
| NYPD | New York Police Department |
| OIC | Officer-in-Charge (usually, the rank of inspector or higher) |

| | |
|--------|--|
| OPC | Ontario Police College |
| OPP | Ontario Provincial Police |
| PAC | Public Archives Canada (now Library and Archives Canada) |
| PARE | Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation |
| PS | Public Servant |
| PSEA | Public Service Employment Act |
| PTSD | Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder |
| R/M | Regular Member |
| RCSW | Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada |
| RFT | Recruit Field Training Program |
| RIC | Royal Irish Constabulary |
| S/Cst. | Special Constable |
| S/Sgt. | Staff Sergeant |
| Sgt. | Sergeant |
| SS | Security Service |
| Supt. | Superintendent |
| UI | Unemployment Insurance (now Employment Insurance) |
| UN | United Nations |
| US | United States |
| WWUI | Working Women United Institute |

Nomenclature

NWMP 1873-1904

The North-West Mounted Police was founded in 1873. Since the original mandate of the force was to police the North-West Territories, its name reflected the regional scope of their authority.

RNWMP 1904-1919

In 1904, the status “Royal” was conferred on the NWMP by King Edward VII in recognition of the military contributions made by members of the police force to the Empire during the Anglo-South Africa War (1899-1902).

RCMP 1919-present

The present name of the force, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, came with the amalgamation of the RNWMP and the Dominion Police. Prior to 1919, the country was divided into two parts and policed by two separate forces. The RNWMP’s jurisdiction covered all of the territory west of what is now known as Thunder Bay, Ontario. The Dominion Police, a small federal police force formed in 1868 to perform protective duties in Ottawa and investigate federal offences, were responsible for policing all of eastern Canada. In November 1919, in the wake of the Winnipeg general strike and on the advice of RNWMP Commr. A.B. Perry, both police forces were amalgamated by an act of Parliament to form the RCMP, giving Canada a centralized police force responsible for federal law enforcement.

Preface

My interest in the history of women in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) is inspired by my experience as a member of the police force from 1977 to 1987. I have long recognized the absence of women from the historical record of the RCMP, and this study is a first step toward acknowledging the contributions, dedication, fearlessness, and loyalty of the women of the RCMP, not to mention their love and passion for the work.

I was hired by the RCMP as a special constable in 1977 specifically to perform criminal surveillance duties. Women had been working as surveillants in the RCMP since the 1960s. The police force was cognizant of the value of using women in surveillance operations since they blended in on the street. In those days, physical size mattered when hiring men as police officers. An imposing physique was a requirement that was based on the belief that size and strength were necessary for enforcing the law. But a physically-imposing presence posed difficulties for men attempting to escape notice while conducting surveillance. It was an area of police work in which women excelled, and their success was often referenced when the RCMP began to grapple with whether or not to hire women as uniformed police officers in the years leading up to 1974.

In the early 1970s, the RCMP hired a number of special constables, or “specials” as they were commonly called, to perform surveillance duties across Canada. Specials were an unusual type of police officer within the police force. They were not subject to transfers around the country but worked at static postings. They received less pay than uniformed members, even though they had full police powers – a differential that was justified by the fact that specials did not wear a uniform, perform general police work, or testify in court. Originally, these stipulations were meant to preserve their anonymity as police officers. This policy eventually changed as it became impossible to withhold key evidentiary testimony in several very high-profile criminal cases.

In September 1978, I attended the RCMP’s training academy in Regina, Saskatchewan, for recruit training. From the outset, specials were an oddity and we drew much attention from the regular recruits and instructors. To begin with, the RCMP usually waited until they had a full complement of thirty-two special constables from

across Canada to form a troop before sending them to the academy in the 1970s. Consequently, many of us were working in the field as surveillants for months before training in Regina, albeit without service revolvers. Special constable troops usually consisted of men and women, another distinction during a time when most uniformed troops were designated male or female. The training program for surveillance specials was truncated and lasted three months instead of the six months required for uniformed members. This program excluded drill, swimming, and detachment training, but included all of the other subjects uniformed members studied. Drill exercises were thought to develop an appearance of authority and regimentation in the police body – undesirable characteristics for surveillants attempting to blend in on the street.

Because specials were not issued with uniforms, they wore civilian clothes while at the academy, unlike uniformed recruits who were issued a number of uniforms throughout their training period. It was during a firearms class toward the end of my training in November that one of my instructors approached me about the civilian clothes the female specials wore to class. He informed me that whenever our troop was scheduled to arrive, the firearms instructors made a habit of turning the heat down on the firing range so that the women would get cold and our nipples would stand out through our tee shirts. I remember being embarrassed to think that for three months, the corporals were secretly looking at my nipples while training me how to fire a revolver. His comment revealed how the sexual harassment of female police officers began as early as their entrance into the training academy. But it also spoke to the level of opposition to the presence of women by male police officers who believed that women's bodies did not quite measure up to the male physical standards that were so highly prized by the RCMP. Little did I realize the importance this moment would hold for me almost forty years later. It was this particular experience that served as the inspiration behind my idea to use the female police body as an organizing concept in this study of the history of women in the RCMP.

Obviously, I bring a higher level of subjectivity to this analysis than many historians might bring to their material. My unusual position of being a researcher with first-hand knowledge of the RCMP has proved to be both beneficial and a hindrance at times, as I have wrestled with my own memories and the emotions that have sometimes surfaced during the course of my research. Writing this history has brought me full circle – bringing me back to my life in the RCMP; but I have returned with the added benefit of

both hindsight and training as a historian to aid me in making sense of moments such as the one I experienced on the firing range that day in 1978.



Arnold Friberg (American, 1913-2010)
Untitled (RCMP Officer walking with Husky/Malamute dog)
Oil on canvas, 25" h x 32"w
Collection of the Tweed Museum of Art, University of Minnesota Duluth
Gift of Potlatch Corporation, D81.x347

Introduction.

Corporeal and Theoretical Bodies

It's taken more than 100 years,
but the Mounties have finally got their women.
Toronto Star, 1974

To understand how the popular image of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) influenced the police force's decision not to allow women to apply as regular members for more than one hundred years, one only has to turn to the artwork of American painter Arnold Friberg. Between 1937 and 1970, Friberg painted more than 200 illustrations of the men of the RCMP for an advertising campaign devised by the Northwest Paper Company of Cloquet, Minnesota. Northwest Paper used the figure of the Mountie, as the members of the RCMP were colloquially known, to advertise and sell its line of printing papers. The company searched for a theme to merchandise its line of paper goods "as strong, dependable, and consistently able to do the job well,"¹ and it determined that the figure of the Mountie represented these values to its customers. Beginning in 1931, Northwest Paper commissioned a number of artists such as Friberg to draw illustrations of Mounties for what turned out to be one of the longest-running series in American advertising history.²

Friberg's Mounties were archetypes of an ideal masculinity, and his illustrations routinely conveyed Victorian ideals of manliness such as courage, stoicism, restraint, and perseverance. They also were designed to reflect the RCMP's traditional core

¹ "The Royal Canadian Mounted Police," Tweed Museum of Art, <http://www.d.umn.edu/tma/collections/mountie.htm> [accessed 27 September 2012].

² Karal Ann Marling, *Looking North: Royal Canadian Mounted Police Illustrations – The Potlatch Collection* (Afton, MN: Afton Historical Society Press, 2003), 25. Friberg's work is also discussed in Bonnie Reilly Schmidt, "The Greatest Man-Catcher of All': The First Female Mounties, the Media, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 22:1 (2011): 200-42.

values of respect, honesty, compassion, and integrity – values that were drilled into every recruit during training. His Mounties were depicted guiding white settlers travelling in covered wagons, reading the bible to Indian children, traversing frozen mountainous terrain and forging rushing rivers, tracking footprints in the snow, rescuing visiting sick children, and enlisting the help of Aboriginal men when searching for lawbreakers. Friberg's construction of the image of the RCMP as an inherently masculine organization was expressed through his idealization of the Mountie body, which seldom varied in appearance throughout the thirty-three years he worked on the Northwest Paper campaign. His subjects were always dressed in their Review Order red serge tunics, Stetson hats, riding breeches with yellow stripe, and riding boots with spurs. They were always placed in northern settings that usually featured a barren, frozen, or rugged landscape as a backdrop to the central figure of the Mountie, who was usually accompanied by his dog or horse. A Friberg Mountie was Caucasian and square-jawed, with a broad forehead, straight nose, and chiseled facial features that were constructed at perfect forty-five degree angles to each other. He was a physically imposing figure, dominating the centre of the events being illustrated by virtue of his stature. His waist and hips were narrow and he was endowed with extremely broad shoulders, prompting one narrator during the course of this research to comment that if the shoulders on a Friberg Mountie were any broader, he would fall off his horse.

Friberg's depictions were extremely popular with the public on both sides of the Canadian-American border and contributed to the financial prosperity of the Northwest Paper Company. But his representations proved to be more than a successful advertising campaign; they further solidified the mythic reputation of the RCMP that had been under construction since 1873, when Prime Minister John A. Macdonald finally realized his dream of a mounted federal police force. Shaped by the print media, popular histories, Hollywood, and the RCMP itself, a heroic image was firmly entrenched in the popular imagination by the time Friberg began his work on Northwest Paper's advertising campaign. By the 1930s, the Mountie was considered a national symbol of Canada, so much so that he was viewed as a non-negotiable ideal of Canadian manhood, an exemplar of the Anglo-Canadian race, and a purveyor of Victorian values. It was an idealized image that the police force readily embraced, demonstrating the institutional endorsement of this representation of Mountie masculinity and the Force, itself, as masculine space. Indeed, according to the Tweed Museum of Art where many

of Friberg's Northwest Paper paintings are currently housed, Friberg was made an honorary member of the RCMP in 1973 during the RCMP's centennial celebrations "for his realistic and accurate illustration of the force."³

The popularity of the RCMP and its image relied heavily on the public's acceptance of representations such as Friberg's in which women were conspicuously absent. In fact, the number of paintings of women interacting with Friberg's Mounties can be counted on the fingers of one hand. Friberg's artwork reinforced and reproduced white masculinity as active in taming the vast expanses of geographical space in the Canadian west, where the absence of women in European settlement was presumed. The close connection between the RCMP, the state, and masculinity, inculcated in Canadian culture by discourses such as Friberg's, left little room for the participation of women in the history of the police force. Women, when included at all, were either white settler women or Aboriginal women who were engaged in domestic duties such as cooking or caring for children. They were always subordinated to, or obscured by, the dominant image of the heroic male Mountie figure who occupied the centre of Friberg's images and other representations of the force. It is not surprising, then, that when women began to agitate for increased rights in Canadian society in the 1960s and 1970s, including the right to become members of Canada's federal police force, few Canadians could envision women in the RCMP. Although policewomen had performed a limited variety of police functions in Canadian municipal police departments since 1912, Canada's federal police force remained opposed to hiring female recruits.

The men of the RCMP have many compelling stories about their experiences as police officers. Many have been well-documented in memoirs and popular histories for the 140 years the police force has been in existence. Male Mounties have also been the subject of a number of academic studies that have also focused exclusively on men and masculinity. All of these accounts, including recently published texts, omit women and women police officers as actors involved in the history of the police force. In contrast, this study focuses on women in the RCMP from the time they were first hired in 1974 until 1990, when changes to the RCMP's uniform regulations allowed men and women to wear the same Review Order uniform for the first time.

³ "The Royal Canadian Mounted Police," Tweed Museum of Art, <http://www.d.umn.edu/tma/collections/mountie.htm> [accessed 27 September 2012].

This history argues that between 1974 and 1990, the women of the RCMP actively worked to define themselves as fully equal members of the police force on their own terms. It relies on the oral narratives of female RCMP officers whose accounts both rival, and mirror, those of male Mounties who have dominated the historical narrative to this point. The study explores how female Mounties renegotiated and resisted the gendered interpretations of women as police officers that limited and, in some cases, ended their careers. Their willingness to face life-threatening and dangerous situations, as well as their ability to resort to physical force when necessary, called into question the belief that women were physically and emotionally unequal to the job. In situations where a woman's physical size was a disadvantage, female Mounties employed creative methods of control that often rendered the use of physical force moot. The alternative policing style women brought to the occupation blurred understandings of the police body as masculine and challenged broader ideas of women as the weaker and subordinate sex in Canadian society. Female Mounties eschewed male standards that stripped them of their power and positioned them as inferior, rather than equal, figures of state authority. In the process, the female police body emerged as a disruptive force in the carefully crafted and longstanding masculine narrative of the RCMP; and it did so during a period when the authority of the police force and the hegemony of the state were being contested for its sexist and racist policies.

Corporeal Bodies

The corporeal body serves as the main organizing concept in the chapters that follow. Antoinette Burton and Tony Ballantyne argue that a focus on bodies is one way that women and gender can be made visible in world history. Generalization in historical analysis eliminates women, children, and racialized "others" from narratives and confines them to the margins of history.⁴ For Ballantyne and Burton, the body can be read as evidence of how women were viewed in specific contexts. The specificity of the body allows for a more inclusive history of women as members of the RCMP. This section introduces some of the key theories, concepts, and themes that shape this discussion on the history of women in the police force. They explain how a number of

⁴ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds. "Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories," *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 4-6.

gendered myths and assumptions about the female body fed beliefs about the inability of women to be effective police officers. They also describe how understandings of masculinity and femininity in the RCMP not only persisted for decades, but mirrored those in operation in broader Canadian society.

The development and persistence of a system of meaning regarding women's and men's bodies in western society has a lengthy history with roots in folklore, philosophy, and theology. Denise Riley, in her provocative philosophical treatise on the category "woman," argues that woman has been characterized by "a peculiar temporality" and as being in an "inherently unstable state" in these discourses.⁵ From the Enlightenment onwards, women's bodies were distanced from what it meant to be human. Women were understood as natural, emotional, and irrational, whereas men were thought of as rational and stoic.⁶ An emphasis on women's shared experience in society implies that there is a "common essence to being a woman" which Riley characterizes as a "false universality."⁷ For Riley, woman is not a unified entity that has existed unchanged throughout history. Her writings challenged the idea of the fixity of gender and called into question the veracity of such formulations of women. Assigning a set of attributes to all women ensured they remained subordinate to the dominance of men in society.

Women's subordination was reinforced in the nineteenth century through scientific findings in disciplines such as biology, natural history, and psychology. Charles Darwin's theories of evolution, in particular, led to the creation of a "hierarchical order in human knowledge" which positioned scientists as the decisive authority in both scientific and social matters.⁸ However, Darwin's theories were problematic for scientists who were hesitant to include themselves in the same evolutionary category as those they considered to be socially inferior. They responded by developing a "human hierarchy of excellence" that worked to "buffer Victorian gentlemen" from their intimacy with the

⁵ Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 7; 14.

⁶ Riley, "Am I That Name?," 7.

⁷ Riley, "Am I That Name?," 99.

⁸ Cynthia Russett, *Sexual Science: The Victorian Construction of Womanhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 5-6.

primates.⁹ Accordingly, groups associated with irrationality – such as women, colonized peoples, and slaves – were viewed as ruled by their bodies and subordinate to white, upper-class males, who were positioned further along the evolutionary continuum. Darwin’s writings regarding the differences between men and women substantiated this idea. As he put it, “[T]he chief distinction in the intellectual powers of the two sexes is shown by man’s attaining to a higher eminence, in whatever he takes up, than can woman – whether requiring deep thought, reason, or imagination, or merely the use of the senses and the hands.”¹⁰

The new field of medical science gained credibility in the second half of the nineteenth century, and doctors began to wield wide-spread social, as well as medical, influence in society. Wendy Mitchison argues that medical science utilized understandings of biology to construct differences between men and women and to reinforce a separate spheres ideology and patriarchal dominance.¹¹ Menstruation in particular was positioned as a physical and social disability that rendered a woman “susceptible to accidents and hysteria.”¹² Women’s bodies were perceived as highly unpredictable because they experienced a flow of blood. Further, fluids that flowed from the inside to the outside of women’s bodies were capable of contaminating others and had the potential to pollute the social order.¹³ Medically constructed notions of female delicacy were grounded in the widespread belief that menstruation had a significant impact on the finite mental and physical energy of women.

Women and men were socialized to assume complementary positions in Victorian society: men were perceived to be able to control their bodies and were endowed with physical strength, reason, aggression, and rationality, while women were perceived as passive, weak vessels, governed by nature and their emotions. Victorian physicians developed a variety of prescriptive literature that reinforced this myth of

⁹ Russett, *Sexual Science*, 14.

¹⁰ Charles Darwin quoted in Michael S. Kimmel, *The Gendered Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 23.

¹¹ Wendy Mitchinson, *The Nature of Their Bodies: Women and Their Doctors in Victorian Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), 281.

¹² Quoted in Patricia Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman: Women, Doctors and Exercise in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), 46.

¹³ Bryan S. Turner, “Body,” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23:2-3 (2006): 224.

female frailty. Patricia Vertinsky points out that medical practitioners emphasized that any competition with men in work, play, or sport exhausted a woman's body and made her unfit for maternal duties.¹⁴ Sport, when practiced by men, symbolized mind over matter or control over the body, something women were perceived as unable to replicate.¹⁵ Physical exercise, athletic competition, indeed any activity that was perceived as diverting a woman's energy from healthy mothering, were discouraged. Medical practitioners cautioned that female patients who engaged in strenuous, habitual cycling, for instance, risked "uterine displacement and spinal shock" from jarring and jolting, excessive strain on the pelvic organs, and hardening of the abdominal muscles, all of which would cause problems during labour.¹⁶

Concerns over the perceived physical limitations of the female body in the nineteenth century were well entrenched in the thinking of most Canadians by the 1970s, so much so that these characteristics were assumed to be natural to femininity and therefore applicable to all women. It is difficult to separate the material bodies of police officers from police culture because, as Christopher Dummitt argues, "the bodily and the cultural come into existence together in the social process of knowing and determining differences between the sexes."¹⁷ The police body was a visible surface where cultural meanings and understandings of gender were frequently inscribed and where visual representations such as Friberg's reinforced and perpetuated those meanings. As Holliday and Hassard suggest, representation is key to the processes by which some bodies are excluded and not recognized as worthy of belonging to the hegemonic group.¹⁸ While differences between the sexes in the workplace were officially eliminated by the RCMP through the implementation of federal employment equity policies and human rights legislation, such policies did little to facilitate changes to informal police culture, where women were consistently positioned as different and therefore unequal to male police officers.

¹⁴ Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 22-23.

¹⁵ Patricia R.W. Clasen, "The Female Athlete: Dualisms and Paradox in Practice," *Women and Language* 24:2 (Fall 2001), 38.

¹⁶ Vertinsky, *The Eternally Wounded Woman*, 79.

¹⁷ Christopher Dummitt, *The Manly Modern: Masculinity in Postwar Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 16.

¹⁸ Ruth Holliday and John Hassard, eds. "Introduction," *Contested Bodies* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 3.

For many of the men of the RCMP, their opposition to the arrival of women was as much about the belief that women were physically and emotionally incapable of performing police duties as it was about maintaining the masculine image of the police force. Physical prowess and a large muscular body were privileged within RCMP culture, where the male police body was considered the most effective tool in fighting crime.¹⁹ In contrast, the female body was deemed an unlikely conduit of civic authority based on its physical size and limitations. Not only were women smaller in stature, but they were considered to be emotionally unpredictable and subject to their reproductive functions. Accordingly, bodies and their representations play an integral role in understanding how gender and power relationships operated within the RCMP and worked to reinforce, resist, recreate, and renegotiate masculinity as the normative standard for RCMP officers.

The Sexualized Female Body

By the end of the nineteenth century, women became so closely identified with their sexual functions that Victorian society came to regard them as “The Sex.” Discourses of law, medicine, and social science coalesced to construct woman as an “unruly body,” requiring “constant surveillance and regulation” to protect the broader moral and social order.²⁰ Their bodies were conceived as both pure and sexual, an ideology that collapsed notions of sex with gender.²¹ The ideal woman was married, compliant, and pure; her body was consumed by sexual and reproductive functions that would lead to motherhood, yet at the same time sexually passive. In contrast, prostitutes were “unsexed” because they were perceived as overtly sensual, motivated by greed, and morally corrupt. Alternatively, male sexuality was conceived of in terms of a single sexual identity that was governed by an immediate urge to satisfy the sexual drive. This particular construction of male sexuality worked to objectify and render the female body as a material receptacle of male desire.

¹⁹ Steve Hewitt, “The Masculine Mountie: The Royal Canadian Mounted Police as a Male Institution, 1914-1939,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 7 n.s. (1996): 162.

²⁰ Carol Smart, “Disruptive Bodies and Unruly Sex: The Regulation of Reproduction and Sexuality in the Nineteenth Century,” *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*, ed. Carol Smart (New York: Routledge, 1992), 8.

²¹ Susan Kingsley Kent, *Sex and Suffrage in Britain, 1860-1914* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 24.

Constructions of women and their bodies as pure and impure, asexual and hyper-sexual, public and private persisted well into the twentieth century. For the better part of the century, women continued to be labelled in dichotomous terms, as either a virgin or a whore. By the 1970s, however, these categories were being recalibrated in the RCMP. Women whose bodies transgressed gendered boundaries by performing work traditionally considered to be men's work were informally regulated through labels that, in the words of the narrators who participated in this study, designated them as "sluts" if they accepted sexual advances from male Mounties or "dykes" if they rejected those advances. A woman who said "no" to a male's sexual advances was not a real woman at all, but was considered sexually deviant. If she said "yes" to those advances, her sexuality was considered out of control. Such dichotomous determinations categorized women as sexualized entities and therefore subject to a hierarchical social relationship with men both inside and outside the workplace.

Understandings of morality, respectability, and women's bodies continued to be linked to social order throughout the twentieth century. Many scholars have effectively shown the ways in which the Canadian liberal state defined and controlled the female body through legislation to prevent abortion, patrol the boundaries of rape, dispense maternity benefits, and regulate marriage and families.²² Socially constructed notions of female passivity, appropriate femininity, and subordination to men were still evident in a number of female-dominated occupations by mid-century. Kathryn McPherson, in her study of the history of Canadian nursing, argues that following World War II, the workplace identities of nurses "were scripted by several potent social forces: social definitions of respectable femininity . . . and the legal and social norms developed by

²² For example, see Carolyn Strange and Tina Loo, *Making Good: Law and Moral Regulation in Canada, 1867-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997); Margaret Little, "'A Fit and Proper Person': The Moral Regulation of Single Mothers in Ontario, 1920-1940," *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, eds. K. McPherson, C. Morgan, and N. Forestell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 123-38; Franca Iacovetta, "Recipes for Democracy: Gender, Family, and Making Female Citizens in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Woman Studies* 20 (Summer 2000): 12-21; Joan Sangster, *Regulating Girls and Women: Sexuality, Family and the Law in Ontario, 1920-1960* (Don Mills: Oxford University Press, 2001).

nursing leaders, administrators, and educators.”²³ Nurses were expected to stand when in the presence of a male doctor, and their white uniforms signified not only professionalism and cleanliness, but sexual purity. Their roles were determined by a number of forces, such as the healthcare system, healthcare administrators, and by social definitions of respectable femininity.

Similarly, female civil servants were expected to conform to notions of appropriate femininity in the 1950s. According to Patrizia Gentile, the Cold War generated considerable angst within the federal civil service, resulting in renewed efforts to strengthen the family and heterosexuality as antidotes to immorality and the weakening of the nation. Concepts of ideal femininity were reinforced by Miss Civil Service beauty contests, where the creation of model images of femininity were connected to the security of the state. The “beauty queen’s height, weight, and measurements, along with her address,” were published in local newspapers following the contests, since it was assumed that lonely bachelors in Ottawa would be interested in the marriageability of Miss Civil Service.²⁴ A female civil servant was viewed as a temporary employee, and marriage bars ensured that the ideal woman left the workforce following marriage to take care of her husband and raise a family.

Ideas about the physical limitations of the female body, notions of the weaker sex, female frailty, the debilitating effects of menstruation, and the moral dangers inherent in female sexuality persisted. In fact, biological determinism “created reverberations in the lives of girls and women that society magnified into deafening commands.”²⁵ By the Cold War, a renewed emphasis on appropriate feminine behaviour and standards of beauty was invoked in an effort to stabilize the family and heterosexuality as both ideal and normative. It is little wonder that, as growing numbers

²³ Kathryn McPherson, “‘The Case of the Kissing Nurse’: Femininity, Sexuality, and Canadian Nursing, 1900-1970,” *Gendered Pasts: Historical Essays in Femininity and Masculinity in Canada*, eds. Kathryn McPherson, Cecilia Morgan, and Nancy M. Forestell (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003): 181.

²⁴ Patrizia Gentile, “‘Government Girls’ and ‘Ottawa Men’: Cold War Management of Gender Relations in the Civil Service,” *Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies*, eds. Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse, and Mercedes Steedman (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000): 135.

²⁵ Beth Light and Joy Parr, eds. “Introduction,” *Canadian Women on the Move, 1867-1920* (Toronto: New Hogtown Press and The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, 1983), 7.

of Canadian women entered the workplace during the postwar period, definitions of femininity and masculinity began to be contested and renegotiated. Understanding how socially constructed meanings associated with women's bodies were connected to policing is essential to understanding why the RCMP delayed the hiring of women as police officers, and how women were received as police officers following their arrival in the field.

Theoretical Bodies

A discussion about the corporeal police body invites comparisons about the place of the body in historical analysis. The body has been the subject of numerous debates in a variety of disciplines. Within the humanities, critics have decried dualist interpretations that privilege one gender over the other, thanks to the influential work of Michel Foucault and the new historicist approach to history. Foucault positioned the hysterization of women's bodies as one of the four "great strategic unities" which, beginning in the eighteenth century, "formed specific mechanisms of knowledge and power centering on sex."²⁶ Foucault argued that the female body was "thoroughly saturated with sexuality" in medical discourse and, eventually, throughout Western society.²⁷ This social construct was subject to acts of power that were conveyed and reinforced through language.

Foucault has been criticized, however, for perpetuating the unequal power relations between men and women. Sandra Lee Bartky, for instance, critiques Foucault's analysis of power for its failure to consider the "disciplinary practices that engender the 'docile bodies' of women" and for being blind to those disciplines that "produce a modality of embodiment that is peculiarly feminine."²⁸ Although Foucault's lack of attention to the female body is a sexist approach for some, his redefinition of the concept of history as a non-linear, non-teleological process, a form of power and a complex

²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction, Volume I*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 103.

²⁷ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 104.

²⁸ Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," *The Politics of Women's Bodies: Sexuality, Appearance, and Behavior*, ed. Rose Weitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 27.

interrelationship of a variety of discourses remain applicable to the history of women in the RCMP.

Apprehension about engaging with the materiality of the body is grounded in concerns over a potential return to essentialism, so acknowledging the body without essentializing sexual difference is a challenge. Feminist theory in particular has provided new interpretive insights about the body as constructed or performative by locating the body in speech acts or discourse, rather than resorting to biological explanations. Judith Butler, for example, argues that “sex” not only functions as normative but also “produces the bodies it governs” and demarcates and differentiates the bodies it controls.²⁹ For Butler, sex is an ideological construct that materializes over time, a domain where the materiality of bodies has been shaped into a gendered matrix dating from the time that Aristotle separated the body from the soul in his philosophical writings.³⁰ A being must submit to the existing gendered and heterosexual discourse in order to be a sex in the first place, and, similarly, a body has to be “signified within the existing ‘heterosexual matrix.’”³¹ Butler further argues that male and female identities are created through a repetition of acts that are developed within specific historical contexts and performed daily.

However, Geertje Mak argues that Butler’s analysis is centred on discourse and subjectivity and fails to explore how the heterosexual matrix “*actually* ‘reads’ the body” and how, once the body is read, a sex is applied in practice.³² Mak’s desire for a more practical approach to the human body that also challenges a binary system of “male” and “female” when so many variations exist reflects a movement on the part of some scholars to push the limits of discourse in search of “refreshing approaches that focus on what has been *done* to bodies.”³³ Clearly, every theoretical approach will have limitations, but scholars across disciplines are seeking a theoretical return to the body without compromising the gains made by feminist and poststructural theorists regarding

²⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of “Sex”* (New York: Routledge, 1993), 1.

³⁰ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 1; 32.

³¹ Geertje Mak, “Doubting Sex from Within: A Praxiographic Approach to a Late Nineteenth-Century Case of Hermaphroditism,” *Gender and History* 18:2 (August 2006), 333.

³² Mak, “Doubting Sex from Within,” 333.

³³ Mak, “Doubting Sex from Within,” 333.

the importance of the discursive in interpreting systems of meaning and the social construction of gender.

The diversity amongst women's bodies and the differing experiences that shape and inform them has been a point of contention between scholars who have critiqued earlier feminists for their assumption that the white, middle- and upper-class female body was representative of all women. Joy Parr argues that "grand theorizing" has been insensitive to "historically specific analyses" regarding differences between women and tends to construct them as a "monolithic, homogeneous category."³⁴ Grand theorizing about the body has been challenged by a number of scholars, including Kathleen Canning, who argues that the term "the body," when used in a broad sense, blurs differences among distinct bodies. Recognizing the limitations of this generalization is the first step towards a "more conceptually conscious and historically grounded use of the term."³⁵

To overcome the limitations generalizations about bodies pose, attention to the specific understandings of the male and female body in the RCMP in the late-twentieth century advances our understanding of the variety of ways gender operated within the occupation of policing. It also underscores the extent to which the male body was regarded as absolutely essential in carrying out police duties. In the 1970s, the RCMP did not acknowledge the existence of the intersex body. Bodies were read as either male or female at the time, and this study reflects that understanding. Accordingly, it is the specificity of the female police body that serves as a bridging device between corporeality and the discursive in historical interpretations of policing in the RCMP. Incorporating women into the ranks of the police force, for example, necessitated the development of a new set of regulations and guidelines, making it a site of convergence between the discursive and the material. While RCMP regulations regarding physical strength and fitness literally changed the shape of women's corporeal bodies during training, dressing the female body in a feminized version of the male Mountie uniform reinforced attitudes of sex difference within the occupation at the same time.

³⁴ Joy Parr quoted in Carol Smart, "Introduction," *Regulating Womanhood: Historical Essays on Marriage, Motherhood and Sexuality*, ed. Carol Smart (New York: Routledge, 1992), 2.

³⁵ Kathleen Canning, *Gender History in Practice: Historical Perspectives on Bodies, Class and Citizenship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), 169.

The female police body was also a site of agency rather than a passive receptacle of social inscription as the women sought to define themselves as police officers on their own terms. This was noticeable when the first female recruits negotiated with the RCMP on the impracticality of carrying a purse through a series of memorandums to the RCMP's commanding officers. They argued that placing a service revolver in a purse posed a real danger to both male and female police officers while on duty. The accessibility of a revolver in a purse left behind in a police car or on the ground during an altercation with a suspect had the potential to endanger the lives of police officers and members of the public. But the women also knew that the purse, a strong symbol of femininity, would diminish their credibility as equal members of the RCMP in the eyes of both the public and their male colleagues. When commanding officers relented and issued the first female Mounties with a holster for their service revolvers, the success of the women in renegotiating standards of femininity made them active agents of change.

This research uses agency as an important element in bridging the theoretical gap between discourse and the material body. Connecting the two positions through agency allows for a more integrated understanding of the experiences of female Mounties. Indeed, as Joan Scott acknowledged, "[T]here is room for a concept of human agency as the attempt (at least partially rational) to construct an identity, a life, a set of relationships, a society."³⁶ Laura Downs argues that spaces that "allow subjects to reflect critically on the (often glaring) disjuncture between their own experiences and the categories of power/knowledge available to them" are possible. Such "intersubjective encounters," as she terms them, allows for a refusal of binaries.³⁷ Kathleen Canning also works to probe the limits of discursive power in her methodology by considering that some realms of experience may have escaped from or subverted discourse in "certain historical moments."³⁸ She seeks to supplement discursive interpretations in order to

³⁶ Joan Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 167.

³⁷ Laura Downs, "Reply to Joan Scott," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35:2 (April 1993): 449.

³⁸ Canning, *Gender History in Practice*, x.

“listen harder and more creatively” to the ways in which historical subjects speak to us,³⁹ an important consideration in oral history.

The oral accounts of the narrators who participated in this research illustrate the ways human agency mediated between theories of corporeality and language. This will be especially noticeable in oral history accounts about the physical damage done to bodies that were injured in the line of duty. These histories were shaped not only by material woundedness, but by gendered discourses as well as human agency. In the chapters that follow, agency is employed to expand on the discursive in an effort to articulate more succinctly women’s policing experiences and enhance the significant role that the construction of gender played in the working lives of members of the RCMP.

The Police Body

The term “the police body” in the following pages is conceptualized in three different ways to describe in greater detail the policing experiences of women in the RCMP. First, the term is used with reference to a group of bodies as institutional instruments of the state. Ideas about the subjugation of a group of bodies, in this case RCMP bodies, draws from Foucault’s theory of bio-power and his thinking surrounding the discipline and the production of docile bodies as instruments of the state.⁴⁰ In Foucault’s formulation, institutions of power such as the military ensured the state’s control and maintenance over society through highly trained and disciplined bodies. Like the Canadian military, the RCMP applied discipline to the bodies of recruits during six months of training at the police academy. The result of vigorous exercise and extensive classes in military drill produced a group of men and women trained to respond physically as a cohesive unit to the orders of commanding officers. As Foucault explained, the production of docile bodies through the reversal of the natural course of bodily energy was a process of disassociating power from the body through the imposition of a new set of restraints placed on it.⁴¹ In this study, references to the police body as a cohesive unit of highly-trained police officers should be viewed in terms of one

³⁹ Canning, *Gender History in Practice*, x.

⁴⁰ Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 140-41.

⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed., trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 138; 151-155.

way the Canadian state utilized a group of government employees to enforce the law, and to constrain and discipline other bodies.

Second, the use of the term embodiment in this discussion is meant to convey the idea that the male RCMP officer, prior to 1974, embodied specific qualities valued and reinforced by the Canadian state. We have already seen how the Mountie was valorized as the ideal of Canadian manhood and white masculinity before 1974 in representations such as Arnold Friberg's. Alternatively, the female police body continued to embody ideas of femininity rather than civic authority, even as the RCMP worked to integrate women into the rank-and-file. Third, the bodies of narrators or other members of the RCMP are sometimes referred to here as "the female police body" or "the male police body." These references are not intended to essentialize or de-humanize the narrators or their bodies, but are used to reinforce the idea that the material body was a highly gendered and important part of the police experience in the 1970s and 1980s. The reader should remember that there is always a human being behind such categories.

Equality and Difference

Ideas about male and female bodies in the RCMP were dependent on gendered understandings of masculinity and femininity that positioned women as different. Yet, the hiring of women on equal terms with men in the RCMP called into question this dichotomy. Theories of women's difference versus their equality pose significant challenges for scholars. Feminists have engaged in debates over the dichotomy "equality versus difference" since the nineteenth century.⁴² The two were often positioned in mutually exclusive terms that implied historians must choose between one and the other.⁴³ Overcoming the challenges posed by this dichotomy required understanding that a hierarchical construction exists within it. Bock argues that as long as "equality is understood as 'sameness' and difference as 'inferiority' . . . there is no

⁴² Gisela Bock, "Challenging Dichotomies: Perspectives on Women's History," *Writing Women's History: International Perspectives*, eds. Karen Offen, Ruth Roach Pierson and Jane Rendall (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), 12.

⁴³ Gisela Bock and Susan James, eds. "Introduction: Contextualizing Equality and Difference," *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 10.

space for human plurality, for the right and liberty to be different” without being subordinate.⁴⁴ Indeed, the presence of women in the RCMP, wherein the difference of female Mounties was often essentialized and their equality often contested, exemplifies the ways these dichotomies supported unequal power relations within the police force.

After the RCMP hired women as police officers on a fully equal basis with men in 1974, the police force officially promoted itself as a gender-neutral organization. Female Mounties were required to meet the same recruiting standards, received the same rate of pay, and were invested with full police powers. However, this stance masked the masculinist nature of informal police culture. While legislation forced the inclusion of women, acceptance was not so easily achieved in the field. Many male police officers adopted a definition of equality that refused to recognize the value of the alternative approaches to policing that women brought to the occupation. Women were expected to respond to violence, engage in physical force, and accept harassment in exactly the same way male officers did. Some men consistently based their opinions on biological determinations of women as the weaker, and therefore inferior, sex in an effort to maintain their position of power in the RCMP. Unequal power relations were reinforced by those male Mounties who assumed all women were incapable of resolving violent situations or were afraid of being physically harmed. Others thought that a woman’s feminine nature rendered her too emotional to be effective during violent confrontations. Still others viewed female Mounties as sexual objects, an assumption based on their apparent willingness to transgress gender boundaries by working in a male-dominated occupation. These strategies allowed many male police officers in the RCMP to negate or dismiss the work of women. This stance constructed their work as inferior and ineffective, reinforcing male dominance of the occupation.

The women who were interviewed for this research saw themselves as fully equal police officers. They worked to define themselves and their work on their own terms rather than attempting to live up to masculine standards that were impossible to meet. Some narrators actively resisted assumptions about their bodies as physically inferior and renegotiated understandings of their capabilities, while others acknowledged

⁴⁴ Gisela Bock, “Equality and Difference in National Socialist Racism,” *Beyond Equality and Difference: Citizenship, Feminist Politics and Female Subjectivity* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 106.

that their smaller size made it necessary to be creative, rather than physical, when making an arrest. As a result, most female Mounties brought alternative perspectives and approaches to policing that threatened perceptions of physical force and emotional detachment as absolute necessities when enforcing the law. They worked to demonstrate that they could be different without being inferior and still do the job well.

Yet, many of the narrators, like many women during the 1970s, were torn between asserting their equality and celebrating their difference from men. One narrator insisted on being married in a white wedding gown, which she expressed as a dream she held since she was a little girl. Her desire was an indication of how girls were socialized to adopt notions of appropriate femininity in Canadian culture. But as an RCMP officer, this narrator was faced with a choice to wear a white wedding gown or her red serge Review Order uniform, the traditional form of dress worn by many members of the RCMP during the marriage ceremony. Her example illustrates how some female Mounties were conflicted over meeting conventional gendered expectations and blurring the lines that defined them. Other women resisted the force-issued work shoes, which one narrator referred to as “nun’s shoes,” that were issued to them as part of their uniform in 1974. While the issue of footwear with a small heel posed a safety concern, the women were also conscious of the appearance of the ugly shoes, even decades later. In this case, their insistence on more functional but attractive footwear illustrates how women were sometimes complicit in perpetuating attitudes about their difference. Their desire to appear feminine, and their fear that they would “lose” their femininity while working as a police officer, was a struggle that was not uncommon for many women entering male-dominated professions in the 1970s. The struggle between women’s understanding of themselves as both different and equal emerged time and again during the interviews as narrators recollected how their bodily differences were usually equated with inferiority as police officers, a categorization they resisted.

Other Categories of Analysis

Intersectionality plays an important role in this study of women in the RCMP. While gender occupies a central position, there are other categories of analysis such as race, class, sexuality, religion, and ethnicity that inform my work. Although these categories are more muted in this project, they nevertheless undergird the social practices that supported the organizational structure of the police force and its culture.

Categories such as race and ethnicity, for example, intersect with gender in a number of complex ways. As representatives of state authority, RCMP officers historically reflected the race and ethnicity of a dominant class of men in society, communicating to Canadians the values and ideals that supported the power of the state. Throughout much of its history, the RCMP has been white, Anglo, Protestant, and male, illustrating how socially constructed identities intersected to uphold the power enjoyed by this hegemonic group within society. The whiteness of RCMP officers was an indication that race and ethnicity mattered to the RCMP, a state institution in which differences were seldom accommodated but rather deployed to reinforce unequal power. Indeed, almost all of the narrators who were interviewed for this study were of Anglo-Canadian descent, attesting to the fact that as late as the 1970s and 80s, the RCMP sought to maintain the power and privilege of the dominant group through its racialized hiring policy. These processes were very much in evidence during and after the hiring of the first women in 1974.

Race considerations also carried over into how the RCMP enforced the law. Beyond its exclusionary recruitment policies, the force policed the boundaries of white hegemony more broadly – a process that was evident in its dealings with Aboriginal people.⁴⁵ Official and popular histories of the NWMP in the nineteenth century routinely positioned Mounties as benevolent protectors of the indigenous population. Little had changed by 1973, when the police force utilized this image in its centennial celebration literature.⁴⁶ In reality, the role of the RCMP was to protect the interests of the dominant group in society through white settlement and the control of the indigenous people living in the region. People living on Aboriginal reserves and in Métis communities in the 1970s frequently resisted the presence of Mounties, especially as issues surrounding the

⁴⁵ There are a number of complex issues associated with the changing terminology surrounding Aboriginal identity in Canada. This study recognizes that Aboriginal people often self-identify in terms of family, community location, and traditional names, while the state defines them in terms of law and legislation. While “Indian” was a term in common usage in the 1970s, it is a contentious term today, outside of discussions of the *Indian Act* and Indian status. Accordingly, this study uses two umbrella terms, Aboriginal and Indigenous, when referencing the indigenous people being policed by the RCMP. See Dr. Linc Kesler, “Aboriginal Identity and Terminology,” First Nations Studies Program, University of British Columbia, <http://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/home/identity/terminology.html> [accessed 8 August 2013].

⁴⁶ Michael Dawson, *The Mountie: From Dime Novel to Disney* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1998), 119.

abuse, arrest, and incarceration of Aboriginal women became more widely known. It was not until 1975, when the first uniformed Indigenous special constable troop graduated from the training academy and began policing duty on reserves, that the racialized hiring policies of the police force began to slowly shift.⁴⁷

Class also undergirds this examination of the RCMP in the latter twentieth century.⁴⁸ When the men and women who were interviewed for this project were asked how they understood their class identities, almost all had to give some thought to the question before answering. Most considered themselves to be from working-class families at the time of recruitment, while some identified their background as from the middle class, particularly if their parents owned a business or held a government job. Many had difficulty articulating their class and did not see themselves as working for an organization dominated by, and answerable to, upper-middle-class men. Yet, the relationship between this class and the state is essential to understanding the role of class in policing in Canada during the study period. Leo Panitch, in his seminal text on the nature of the state in Canada in the 1970s, argued that a close connection existed between the state and business interests, where an “ideological hegemony emanating from both the bourgeoisie and the state” ensured that the “national interest and business interests” were one and the same in Canada.⁴⁹ The RCMP played an important role in

⁴⁷ Dale Sheehan and Redd Oosten, *Behind the Badge: History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police “Depot” Division* (Regina: Centax Books, 2006), 295-96. It would take decades for Aboriginal police officers to move up the ranks in the RCMP. It was not until 2010 when the first Aboriginal man, Asst. Commr. Russ Mirasty, assumed command of an RCMP division (Saskatchewan). In 2013, C/Supt. Brenda Butterworth-Carr assumed Mirasty’s command following his retirement, a promotion that positioned her as the first Aboriginal woman to command an RCMP division. Jennifer Graham, “Aboriginal Woman Becomes Top Cop in Saskatchewan as Head of RCMP Division,” *The Canadian Press* (23 August 2013). http://www.ottawacitizen.com/story_print.html?id=8820775&sponsor [accessed 24 August 2013].

⁴⁸ For a discussion on the issue of shifting definitions and perceptions of class in North America see Michael Zweig, *The Working Class Majority: America’s Best Kept Secret* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000) and Zweig, “Introduction: The Challenge of Working-Class Studies,” *What’s Class Got to do With It?: American Society in the Twenty-First Century* (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2004): 1-6.

⁴⁹ Leo Panitch, “The Role and Nature of the Canadian State,” *The Canadian State: Political Economy and Political Power*, ed. Leo Panitch (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 13. Also see Ralph Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1969), 125 and Miliband, *The State in Capitalist Society*, 3rd ed. (Pontypool, Wales: Merlin Press, 2009), 55.

shoring up the interests of this “capitalist class” or the “dominant class.”⁵⁰ Class intersected with other systems of identifying difference and distributing power based on that difference.

Other categories of experience such as region were also significant. The narrators who participated in the oral history interviews for this research represented policing in every province and territory in Canada except Prince Edward Island and Nunavut, making geographical space an important consideration. The women had varying experiences in the workplace that can be attributed, in part, to regional and cultural attitudes toward femininity and masculinity. Gendered behaviours and misogynistic attitudes differed across communities and were therefore unpredictable. For instance, women stationed in small towns experienced a greater degree of discrimination and harassment than those who worked in larger urban centres. While geographical isolation from a centralized headquarters often facilitated the abuse of female police officers by male Mounties, cultural and social factors sometimes contributed to their discriminatory treatment from members of the public. Since the prairies were the site of the arrival of the first NWMP officers in 1874, for example, the image of the police force was closely associated with the development and history of the region. The arrival of female Mounties disrupted the region’s pride in its historical connection to the police force, which was still viewed as an iconic and masculine institution responsible, in part, for the taming of the west.⁵¹

Generational differences also emerged during the course of this research. Earlier generations of female Mounties sometimes critiqued later cohorts for speaking out on issues such as maternity leave and increased workplace rights in the decades following 1974. They feared that voicing these demands would be perceived by male police officers as asking for special considerations, reinforcing the belief that female police officers expected preferential treatment. This earlier generation of women feared “group blame” – when the actions of one female police officer resulted in the categorization of

⁵⁰ For a discussion on the ways the RCMP maintained social control for economic interests, see Steve Hewitt, “September 1931: A Re-interpretation of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police’s Handling of the 1931 Estevan Strike and Riot,” *Labour/Le Travail* 39 (Spring 1997):159-78.

⁵¹ Steve Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue: The Transformation of the RCMP in Alberta and Saskatchewan, 1914-1939* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 4-7. Also Dawson, *The Mountie*, 122-25.

all women as unequal to the job – and continued to work to gain credibility from their male peers by distancing themselves from what were perceived as feminist or feminine demands, unlike later cohorts of female officers. This resistance to being categorized as a feminist suggests that the first groups of female Mounties were closely monitored by their male peers for signs of nonconformity and resistance to conventional ideas of femininity. As a result, female Mounties were not always united by their gender when it came to agitating for increased rights in the workplace.

Oral History and Methodology

Oral histories are one of the major sources for this study. Historians have limited access to official RCMP documents about women in the police force. Despite attempts to obtain documentation under the *Access to Information Act*, I was denied access to many of the documents and files I requested for this research. In the absence of official documents, the oral histories of the people who experienced the events under study became invaluable resources in compiling this history. Given the importance and prominence of the oral accounts, questions will emerge for the reader about the role of memory, subjectivity, and interpretation in the analysis process. This research has been guided by the insights and work of a number of oral historians whose theories were carefully considered during the compilation and transcription of the oral testimonies. I was mindful, for instance, of the role of the historian in recording the oral account, in transcribing the interview material, and in the production of the written transcript, along with the knowledge that the historian occupies an unequal position of power over the narrator.

However, as Susan Geiger notes, it is important to remember that the interview relationship is being shaped from two directions, from that of the researcher and that of the narrator, a process she describes as “sharing the authority.”⁵² Michael Frisch, the first oral historian to use the concept of shared authority in 1990, focuses on the democratic processes that shape the oral history interview. Frisch makes the compelling argument that oral history has the capacity to “redefine and redistribute intellectual authority” rather than allowing historical research and communication to “continue to

⁵² Susan Geiger, “What’s So Feminist About Women’s Oral History?,” *Journal of Women’s History* 2:1 (Spring 1990), 175-76.

serve as an instrument of power and hierarchy.”⁵³ He seeks a synthesis between scholarly authority and knowledge based on the memories and personal histories of narrators that are, themselves, affected and effected by the conversation with the interviewer.⁵⁴ Shared authority also works to ensure that the person being interviewed is not erased in the final text, objectified, or rendered as “text.”⁵⁵ This was an important consideration during the writing of this research, given that almost all of the narrators requested anonymity, making it necessary to resist the potential to objectify them as “subjects” or “sources” in the process of protecting their identities.

It is the desire to democratize historical writing that has prompted researchers such as Stephen High to re-evaluate the term “shared authority,” and adopt a more expansive term that indicates “sharing authority” is an ongoing process. Sharing authority not only requires the cultivation of trust and shared decision-making during the interview, but requires the development of collaborative relationships that continue long after the interview has ended.⁵⁶ For example, several women who claimed not to have endured sexual harassment, emotional stress, or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) later acknowledged to me that they struggled with these issues but preferred not to speak of them during a formal, recorded interview. Some admitted to feeling a sense of shame as a result of these experiences; others expressed a desire to “move on” with their lives rather than recall painful moments from their past. Nancy Janovicek writes, “People tend to exclude unpleasant experiences from their recollections.” When this occurs, “historians find themselves in the uncomfortable position of deciding whether or not to push them to talk about things they would rather forget.”⁵⁷ This research was no exception. I decided not to push for further information at the time of the interview. It was only after the interview was over, and in one case, years later, that some narrators confided their struggles with sexual harassment or PTSD. These examples illustrate the ongoing nature of sharing authority that occurred during the course of research.

⁵³ Michael Frisch, *A Shared Authority: Essays on the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), xx.

⁵⁴ Frisch, *A Shared Authority*, xxii.

⁵⁵ Geiger, “What’s So Feminist About Women’s Oral History?,” 175.

⁵⁶ Stephen High, “Sharing Authority: An Introduction,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43:1 (Winter 2009): 13.

⁵⁷ Nancy Janovicek, “Oral History and Ethical Practice: Towards Effective Policies and Procedures,” *Journal of Academic Ethics* 4: 1-4 (December 2006), 160.

The democratization of history challenges historians to protect the dignity and privacy of their interview subjects on moral and ethical grounds while balancing the methodological requirements of the discipline. Nancy Janovicek comments that, while anonymity is not a new “ethical issue” for social historians, the discipline of history has not always deemed “anonymous sources to be credible evidence,” since they are inaccessible to other scholars who wish to “verify the accuracy of the research.”⁵⁸ With these considerations in mind, narrators who agreed to be interviewed for this study were assigned a pseudonym. As one female narrator clarified, “We still have to work here!”⁵⁹ – suggesting that female RCMP officers were cognizant of the potential for retaliation from their colleagues in the field for speaking to a researcher about their policing experiences. As an added precaution, the location and names of cities, towns, provinces, and detachments have been changed to protect the identities of all the respondents, their peers, and their commanding officers. The exceptions to this guideline were cases in which names, locations, and events were a matter of public record, where they were recorded in autobiographical or historical material, where police officers have been identified in the media, or where narrators have agreed to be identified.

This research was undertaken with the knowledge and consent of the RCMP. In 2007, Commr. Beverly Busson granted me permission to conduct interviews with serving members of the RCMP from across Canada.⁶⁰ A total of forty-three interviews were conducted; twenty-one with female RCMP police officers, serving or retired; eight with male Mounties, serving or retired; and additional interviews with three female and one male civilian member of the RCMP, three Mountie wives, a retired female member of the Canadian Armed Forces, one retired female municipal police officer, three civilians, and two retired female Ontario Provincial Police officers. Research participants answered a standardized list of questions which were given to them in advance. Narrators were also encouraged to deviate from the questions and enter into open-ended discussions whenever they felt it necessary to do so. Their responses were digitally recorded. All of

⁵⁸ Janovicek, “Oral History and Ethical Practice,” 161.

⁵⁹ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

⁶⁰ Commr. Beverly Busson, e-mail message to the Office of Research Ethics, Simon Fraser University (File #37327), 5 April 2007. All interviews were subject to ethical conduct guidelines set out by the Department of Research and Ethics at Simon Fraser University which approved my proposal for oral fieldwork on 19 May 2006.

the interviews took place during a five-year period between 2007 and 2012. All were conducted in person with the exception of three, which took place by telephone.

In the chapters that follow, many of the memories expressed by the female narrators are far from positive. The dominant memory of many of the women is one of challenge and embattlement during a very difficult period in the history of the RCMP. As a result, there may be a tendency for readers to infer that the women who were interviewed considered all male police officers to be misogynistic and self-consciously engaged in the oppression of women. This would be an inaccurate assessment; many women acknowledged that male police officers supported, aided, and respected them and the work of female Mounties in general. Readers should also consider that men in the 1970s were receiving mixed messages about women's difference and equality too, and many struggled with shifting gender roles in Canadian society. Nevertheless, the overwhelming memory of oppression that emerges in the narratives illustrates how the experiences of women in the RCMP shaped not only the history of the police force, but their personal lives as well, even decades later.

The Chapters

This research is divided into five chapters. The first chapter traces the RCMP's move toward hiring women. It specifically focuses on the external and internal pressures that came to bear on the police force in the 1970s to reform its discriminatory hiring policies. Following the official announcement in 1974 that the RCMP was accepting applications from women for the first time, the police force had just five months to prepare for the arrival of the first female troop, known as Troop 17, at the training academy.⁶¹ The RCMP's decision to hire women sparked intense national and international media interest and commanding officers used the media's interest to generate positive public relations during a time when the RCMP was under criticism. The

⁶¹ There are thirty-two recruits in each troop, following traditional military practice. During drill manoeuvres, troop members are positioned four across in eight rows when marching on parade. RCMP troops are numbered sequentially based on their arrival at the training academy in Regina after 1 April, the federal government's fiscal year-end. For example, Troop 17 was the seventeenth troop of recruits to enter the academy for training following 1 April 1974. The year of a troop's training appears in brackets after the troop number. Troop 17 (1974/75) indicates that the women began six months of training near the end of 1974 and completed it early in 1975.

latter part of the chapter deals with the training experiences of Troop 17, their reception at the academy, and their preparation for work in the field.

The creation of the female Mountie uniform and how the RCMP equipped the women of Troop 17 with their kit and firearms is the subject of the second chapter. To date, the women's uniform remains a relatively obscure aspect of RCMP history, allowing the iconic red serge Review Order uniform issued to men continues its dominance. Two orders of the women's uniform are considered in detail: the "Service Order" or the daily operational uniform, and the "Review Order" or ceremonial red serge dress uniform. This chapter focuses on the ways the male and female Mountie uniform conveyed feminine and masculine difference, despite the rhetoric that women were being hired on an equal basis with men as police officers. It also reveals how the RCMP worked to placate a number of constituents concerned about the erosion of the masculine image of the police force and the de-feminization of women working as police officers. The RCMP's desire to enhance gender norms and maintain the male Review Order uniform as a solely masculine representation of both the force and the nation are also discussed.

Chapter three provides a detailed examination of the operational experiences of female Mounties at detachments and the gendered opposition they encountered as members of the RCMP. During the interviews, three groups who were particularly opposed to the integration of women into the RCMP emerged: Mountie wives, male citizens, and male supervisors or non-commissioned officers (NCOs). NCOs were the largest group of Mounties to actively oppose women in the RCMP. They held the power and rank to denigrate the women, and their opinions influenced commanding officers' assessments of female police officers. They proved to be extremely effective mediators of how women were received by the force, and as a group they remained skeptical about the ability of any women to convey authority, control violence, and engage in physical altercations, even when women demonstrated that the opposite was true. They were not the only police officers opposed to women in the RCMP, however. Male Mounties of all ranks resorted to a variety of harassment tactics in an effort to marginalize the women and, ideally, pressure them to resign. Additionally, informal police culture facilitated networks of gossip and rumours that created tensions for the women, who were closely scrutinized not only during working hours but afterwards. This was especially true for women stationed in rural areas and small towns, where their personal lives were also

closely observed by members of the public. Despite the intense opposition that many of the women faced, female Mounties engaged with their peers and the public in a number of creative ways on their own terms to demonstrate agency and to redefine the nature of law enforcement in gender-neutral terms.

The fourth chapter deals with sexuality and women in the RCMP. The RCMP was unprepared to deal with issues regarding marriage between two Mounties. In particular, Mountie marriages had specific implications for the RCMP's transfer system. A promotion was usually accompanied by a transfer, and how to accommodate the transfer of a married couple when only one was promoted created a whole new set of logistical problems for commanding officers. The RCMP was also unprepared for the problems pregnant Mounties posed for its operational police commitments. Women who took maternity leave were not replaced in the field, creating manpower shortages for detachments and generating considerable resentment among male officers (and their wives) when they were required to work longer hours.

In general, male Mounties made assumptions about the morals of single women who chose to work in a male-dominated environment in the 1970s and 80s, anticipating that they would willingly engage in a sexual relationship when propositioned. Within police culture, the career of a female Mountie, single or married, could ironically be jeopardized either by her engaging in a sexual act with a colleague or her refusal to participate in one. As one narrator claimed, it was as though male Mounties thought it was their right to have sex with a female colleague. Some lesbian Mounties considered their sexual orientation an advantage that protected them from having to deal with the sexual advances of their male colleagues. They were not exempt from rumours and speculation about their sex lives, however, and some experienced discriminatory treatment on the job because of their sexual orientation.

When female Mounties began work in the field in 1975, sexual harassment was just beginning to be recognized as a form of discrimination in the workplace and Canadian legislation protecting workers from harassment was not yet in place. As a result, sexual harassment as an informal means of regulating women gained a foothold as an acceptable practice within RCMP culture. The oral histories will show the extent to which supervisors and commanding officers participated in, or at the very least condoned, the sexual harassment of female police officers. Men of all ranks adopted a

“boys will be boys” attitude and viewed sexual harassment as an appropriate response to women who chose to cross gendered boundaries and work in a male-dominated occupation.

Finally, chapter five discusses the emotional aspects of policing, particularly the idealization of emotional detachment as an appropriate response to pain, fear, danger, and suffering. Until recently, the discipline of history has neglected the subject of emotion as an important part of historical analysis. As Anderson and Smith point out, the “marginalization of emotion has been part of a gender politics of research in which detachment, objectivity and rationality have been valued, and implicitly masculinized, while engagement, subjectivity, passion and desire have been devalued, and frequently feminized” within the academy.⁶² However, emotions occupy an important place in the history of the RCMP. Emotionalism was deemed an unprofessional and feminine response to fear and danger, evidenced by the RCMP’s failure to provide critical incident or trauma counseling for its police officers for decades. The failure to recognize mental and emotional trauma reinforced the belief that it was unmanly to need and to seek emotional and psychological help. The image of the stoic Mountie hero remained a potent one in RCMP culture and female Mounties were expected to live up to this manly ideal.

In 1970, the Northwest Paper Company ended its advertising campaign that featured the Mountie as a symbol of the strength and resilience of its paper products. The idealized male Mountie figure created by its artists had run its course. That year, Arnold Friberg completed his last Mountie painting for the company. Also that year, the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW), assigned to investigate the role of women in Canadian society, released its final report to the government. The commissioners made a number of recommendations, including that the RCMP be opened to the hiring of women on an equal basis with men. In May 1974, when the commissioner of the RCMP announced the police force would be hiring women for the first time in its 101-year history, Northwest’s decision proved to be prescient. The masculine image of the police force was about to be disrupted by the arrival of women in the RCMP.

⁶² Kay Anderson and Susan J. Smith, “Emotional Geographies,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 26:1 n.s. (2001): 7.

Chapter 1.

The Arrival of the New Police Body

The fact that we have recruited women in the RCMP
without any outside pressure
reflects an enlightened attitude within the force.
Superintendent William F. MacRae, *The Vancouver Sun*, 1975

Adjusting to the semi-military ways of the Force was not easy and the Drill
Staff took pains to teach us to march without a wiggle!
Barbara Woods, *RCMP Quarterly*, 1975

Marching has played an important role in the public image of the RCMP for most of its history. RCMP officers have marched during royal visits, in parades, at state funerals, riots, strikes, rodeos, coronations, commemorative ceremonies, and police funerals for more than a century. Marching was, and is, a militaristic activity that was not only connected to nationhood, but conveyed discipline, order, regimentation, and self-control. Marcel Mauss observes that marching is a rite and a tradition, a specific technique of the body that varies between societies and nations. Techniques of the body, for Mauss, are “*actions of a mechanical, physical or physiochemical order*”; there is no technique in the absence of tradition.¹ For the RCMP, precision drill has provided an important link to its paramilitary and colonial past and positioned the male police body as authoritative and representative of the state in a very public way. So important has marching been to the image of the RCMP that foot drill occupied a significant portion of the training a new recruit received at the training academy in Regina throughout the twentieth century.²

¹ Marcel Mauss, *Techniques, Technology and Civilisation*, ed. Nathan Schlanger (New York: Durkheim Press, 2006), 79-80; 83.

² In 1985, for example, recruits received fifty hours of drill instruction during six months of training. Tony Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits: Blood, Sweat and Fears: Life in the RCMP Training Depot,” *Equinox* 22 (1985), 46.

It is not surprising then, that when the first women hired by the RCMP were trained at the academy in 1974, conventional discourses about nationhood and manliness were disrupted. The sight of a troop of female police bodies marching on the academy's parade square for the first time in one hundred years challenged conventional images of the RCMP and the nation. Before the arrival of the first female recruits, drill instructors at the academy wondered if women could be trained to march and whether the female body could be disciplined in the same way the male body could. There were some surprises. One drill instructor recalled that because women did not possess the same upper-body muscle mass as men, they were able to swing their arms "shoulder high and straight" with greater precision than male recruits when marching in formation.³ But there were other aspects of the female body that concerned the instructors. Woods's recollection that the drill staff was determined to train the wiggle out of female recruits' marching illustrates the extent to which the police force worked to maintain its masculine, paramilitary image. The female body was problematic for the RCMP simply because it was not a male body.

The training of the female police body became a significant concern for the RCMP following the engagement of women as officers in 1974. To understand this issue more clearly, this chapter begins with a study of the complex series of social, political, and cultural shifts taking place in Canada between 1960 and 1974 that led to the decision to hire women as RCMP officers. During those years, a number of internal and external events converged to exert pressure on the RCMP to change its employment and hiring practices. The RCMP responded to these pressures by turning to the media to help restore its eroding image, a strategy that placed the first women, and their bodies, at the centre of gendered discourses about women's appropriate role in society. Following their hiring and arrival at the training academy in 1974, women were expected to adopt training methods that emphasized physical violence and aggression as appropriate responses to law enforcement, standards of masculinity in policing that were reinforced by RCMP instructors. Although male bodies were also regulated and controlled by the RCMP during training, female bodies were regulated by understandings of biological difference that positioned women and their bodies as less than ideal for police duties. As we shall see, however, understandings of gender in the

³ Darryl Butler, e-mail communication to author, 16 December 2009.

RCMP were complex and fluid which enabled women in the force to challenge, in subtle and varied ways, prevailing notions of masculinity as integral to the occupation.

Masculinity and the RCMP in the Twentieth Century

When Commr. Maurice Nadon announced on 24 May 1974 that the police force would begin to accept applications from women for the first time, many Canadians, including members of the RCMP, were taken by surprise. One of the first female applicants recalled hearing the announcement on her car radio while on her way to work that morning. She immediately pulled into the nearest detachment, where the young constable at the desk had to ask his sergeant if it was true that the RCMP was hiring women. When the sergeant confirmed that he had just heard it on the radio too, the constable asked him, "What do I do?" The sergeant replied, "Give her an application."⁴ The commissioner's announcement was the culmination of a long and complex journey that had been 101 years in the making. One senior officer privy to discussions on changes to the RCMP's employment policies in the 1970s commented decades later that the hiring of women was "inevitable."⁵ Yet, while women were being utilized in limited capacities in work such as surveillance at the time, the full integration of women had yet to take place, leaving several questions unanswered. Why did it take so long for the RCMP to hire women as police officers? What cultural and political conditions exerted pressure on the RCMP to change their employment practices? How involved were Canadian politicians in influencing the RCMP's decision? What role did the Canadian public play in challenging RCMP policy? Who made the final decision? And why was the year 1974 chosen as the most suitable time to hire women as Mounties?

A number of highly gendered social practices in Anglo-Canadian society, rooted in understandings about masculinity and femininity, played a significant role in denying women employment in the RCMP. While women's role in the occupation was expanding in Canadian municipal police departments throughout the twentieth century, the NWMP, RNWMP, and later the RCMP opposed the engagement of women in any policing capacity. That is not to say that women were not involved at various times throughout the police force's history, notably as matrons at the turn of the twentieth century. For

⁴ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁵ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

example, during the Yukon Gold Rush, the NWMP hired several women as matrons between 1901 and 1904 following pressure from women's groups to protect female prisoners.⁶ The most well-known was Katherine "Klondike Kate" Ryan who was hired as Whitehorse's first matron before she was assigned the rank of "Constable Special" in 1903. Her duties, in addition to those of matron, included searching female passengers on trains and steamers who were attempting to smuggle gold dust out of the territory to avoid paying taxes.⁷ Ryan was credited with being "able to examine her own sex with thoroughness that delicacy prevented the men of the Northwest Mounted Police from performing."⁸ The work of matrons was closely associated with notions of appropriate femininity and the regulation of women's bodies. Little else is known about these women or their activities with the police force, and their positions were eliminated after the gold rush ended. The matron and the female constable special disappeared from the historical narrative, allowing the figure of the masculine Mountie to continue its dominance.

In the early decades of the twentieth century, the physical characteristics of the male RCMP officer were deemed appropriately masculine and the Mountie served as the living embodiment of a state that was manly, white, and powerful. Steve Hewitt points out that the RCMP "celebrated a new ideal male body type" that emerged when an emphasis on large, muscular bodies became the socially desirable standard for men. Accordingly, the physiques of NWMP applicants were carefully measured and a thirty-five inch chest was the acceptable minimum requirement for engagement.⁹ Indeed, in the RCMP's annual report to parliament in 1919, the commissioner stated that the police force had "no place for weaklings" and only men with a "robust physique can carry on"

⁶ Helene Dobrowolsky, *Law of the Yukon: A Pictorial History of the Mounted Police in the Yukon* (Whitehorse: Lost Moose, The Yukon Publishers, 1995), 116.

⁷ T. Ann Brennan, *The Real Klondike Kate* (Fredericton, NB: Goose Lane Editions, 1990), 138.

⁸ William Lewis Edmunds, "The Woman Called Klondike Kate," *Maclean's* (15 December 1922): 64. Personnel files and employment records for members of the NWMP and RNWMP who worked between 1904 and 1920, including matrons, were destroyed by fire. RCMP Historical Section, email communication to author, 8 March 2012. Confusingly, the RCMP's website states that the earliest records of the NWMP were destroyed by fire in the West Block of the Parliament buildings in 1897, but that files "for the late 1880s and 1890s and the last years of the NWMP however, are abundant." See <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/nwmp-pcno/025003-2000-e.html> [accessed 20 August 2013].

⁹ Hewitt, "The Masculine Mountie," 162.

with the work of policing the nation.¹⁰ Michael Dawson also noted that the “Mountie’s superiority was simply established, on one level at least, by his ideal physical appearance . . . [T]he body was the mirror of one’s standing and respectability” in popular discourses and in official RCMP reports.¹¹ The RCMP identified itself as a force of white, adult males with imposing physical characteristics, a branding that transcended simple understandings of a masculine ideal. A robust physique was equated with high levels of manly aggression and suggested to the general public that Mounties were more than capable of responding to physical violence with force if necessary.

As the twentieth century progressed, the commissioners of the RCMP were actively engaged in perpetuating the force’s masculine, heroic identity. Some, such as Commr. James MacBrien wanted to promote a more modern, professional, and efficient image of the RCMP. MacBrien declared in 1931 that the “romance of the West had gone far enough.” He went so far as to suggest that the word “Mounted” be dropped from the name of the police force, a suggestion that met with stiff protests from Canadians.¹² In 1963, in response to public criticism over allegations made by Calvin MacDonald that he had worked for the RCMP as a communist infiltrator, Commr. George McClellan insisted that “I’m not interested in projecting an image. I’m interested in projecting the Force,” suggesting that the commissioner was more interested in fighting crime than perpetuating the romantic image of the police force.¹³ Indeed, in 1965, McClellan changed the uniform for general police duties to a more practical, modern forage cap, blue trousers, and brown jacket.¹⁴ However, his successor, Commr. W.L. Higgitt overturned these changes arguing that it “is important to restore rather than further erode our image.”¹⁵ Higgitt issued new standing orders, mandating that the Stetson hat, shirt, tie, riding breeches, long boots with spurs be worn by all operational police officers

¹⁰ Hewitt, “The Masculine Mountie,” 162.

¹¹ Dawson, “That Nice Red Coat,” 123-24.

¹² MacBrien quoted in Dawson, *The Mountie*, 85-86; also in Lorne and Caroline Brown, *An Unauthorized History of the RCMP*, 1st ed. (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, 1973), 127.

¹³ George McClellan quoted in Peter Trueman, “We’re Not in a Popularity Contest,” *Toronto Daily Star*, 25 March 1963.

¹⁴ Butler, email message to author, 8 April 2010.

¹⁵ The Commissioner, quoted in Administrative Instruction 327 “Dress Regulations,” RCMP Administrative Manual, 30 September 1970, reprinted in Jack Ramsay, “My Case Against the RCMP,” *Maclean’s* (July 1972): 23.

to enhance the appearance and prestige of the RCMP.¹⁶ But wearing dark blue wool breeches and riding boots with spurs while driving a police cruiser, chasing suspects on foot, or in the summer heat, became a contentious issue among the rank-and-file.¹⁷ Nevertheless, Higgitt clearly viewed the dressing of the Mountie body as a valuable tool in communicating specific ideals about manliness, discipline, and Anglo-Canadian tradition, even if it was at the expense of his own men.

The RCMP and its commissioners were not alone in perpetuating the mythic image of the police force. Canada's tourism industry actively promoted the masculine Mountie as a national symbol. Dave Moore recalled that, in the 1950s, the RCMP "always used to send tall guys to Banff and Jasper [Alberta] because they were always getting their picture taken. [Breeches] and boots is almost a cavalry-type uniform and it looks good on a tall person. I don't think it looks very good on a female that is only five foot one inch."¹⁸ For Moore and many in the RCMP, it was only the large, masculine police body that could effectively represent state authority to visitors to Canada. The RCMP's desire to accommodate the tourism industry by posting Mounties to tourist destinations is a reflection of the RCMP's interest in promoting its strong, virile, and manly officers as symbols of Canada. Perhaps no other national image represented the degree to which women were positioned as unequal members in Canadian society than the body of the dashing Mountie hero.

While tourists may have expected to see a tall, masculine Mountie body in Banff, there were occasional enquiries about the existence of "lady Mounties."¹⁹ Michael Dawson documents how receptionists at Ontario government tourist reception centres in the 1950s were asked if they were lady Mounties because they wore red, white, and

¹⁶ Administrative Instruction 327 "Dress Regulations," reprinted in Ramsay, "My Case Against the RCMP," 23.

¹⁷ In 1972, an Alberta judge, hearing of an RCMP officer chasing two fleeing suspects on foot in Red Deer, noted in his judgment that boots and spurs had no place on police officers in an urban area. Ramsay, "My Case Against the RCMP," 69.

¹⁸ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

¹⁹ This may have been due, in part, to the growth of the number of policewomen working in police departments in the United States. The 1950s was a decade of rapid advancement for American policewomen, whose numbers and responsibilities increased substantially during the period. It is likely that some American tourists assumed that this development was also taking place in Canada and expected to see female Mounties. See Dorothy Moses Schulz, "Policewomen in the 1950s: Paving the Way for Patrol," *Women Police*, ed. Mangai Natarajan (Hants, U.K.: Ashgate, 2005), 37.

navy-blue uniforms.²⁰ The tourism industry's continued reliance on the male Mountie image later undermined the authority of female RCMP officers once they began work in the field. Allison Palmer, who was stationed in Banff, Alberta, in the late-1970s, recalled that tourists questioned whether female Mounties were really summer students dressed in "rented" uniforms to promote Canada. She also remembered two American tourists thinking that a female Mountie dressed in red serge was wearing "the new Salvation Army uniform."²¹ These examples illustrate that to some civilians, women were expected to mimic an essentially masculine image while engaged in activities more in keeping with their socially constructed roles. Palmer's posting to Banff during a time when female Mounties were still a novelty also illustrates how the RCMP worked to promote itself as an inclusive organization while it wrestled with how to maintain its masculine image in the midst of shifting gender roles for women.

External Pressure: Demands for a Royal Commission

In the final decades of the twentieth century, challenges to the dominance of white bourgeois masculinity in Canada emerged. Growing demands for an equal role for women in all sectors of society increased political pressure on the Canadian government to introduce legislative reforms.²² Women's struggle for employment equity in Canada is perhaps best illustrated by the fight for equal pay and workplace rights by a female municipal police officer. In the 1960s, Lois Beckett, employed as a constable in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario, since 1949, sued the police force for the same rate of pay as her male colleagues and for admittance to the police association. The department dismissed

²⁰ Dawson, *The Mountie*, 66.

²¹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

²² By 1970, just eighteen women had been elected to the House of Commons since women received the vote fifty years earlier. There was only one female judge in Canada, and Judy LaMarsh was the only woman serving as a Cabinet Minister. Until 1970, when a woman married, her Canadian passport was no longer valid and she was obligated to apply for a new one. There was no maternity leave or daycare, and it was common for women to lose their jobs once they became pregnant. Women earned one-third less than men with few benefits and little job security. See Mary Eberts, "Write It For the Women': Doris Anderson, the Changemaker," *Canadian Woman Studies* 26:2 (Summer/Fall 2007): 6; Christina Newman, "What's so Funny About the Royal Commission on the Status of Women?," *Saturday Night* 84:1 (January 1969): 23.

her from her duties as a constable and reclassified her as a clerk-typist.²³ In 1968, her case went to the Ontario Supreme Court, where Justice R. Fergusson ruled in favour of the police force and the police association, arguing that Beckett should be paid less than her male colleagues because, as a woman, she did not perform the same duties as men and did not have dependents to provide for. To Justice Fergusson, the lower rate of pay was justified since it conformed to “all the rules of civilization, economics, family life and common sense.”²⁴ Male breadwinner ideology helped sustain a gendered division of labour in Canada, where it was assumed that husbands supported an economically dependent wife and children, while women worked at running an efficient household.²⁵ These gendered understandings informed Ferguson’s ruling as he chastised Beckett for transgressing the gendered division of labour by assuming the roles of crimefighter and breadwinner.

Beckett was not alone in her struggle for equal for equal rights for Canadian women. Two years before Beckett’s day in court, thirty-two English-speaking middle-class women’s organizations attended a meeting at Toronto’s University Women’s Club where they formed the Committee for the Equality of Women in Canada (CEWC) on 3 May 1966. The CEWC prepared a brief for presentation to Liberal Prime Minister Lester B. Pearson requesting a royal commission to “inquire into, report on and to make recommendations which will enable women to achieve such excellence in public and private life as meets the standards set by the [United Nation’s] Universal Declaration of Human Rights.”²⁶ On 19 November 1966, five CEWC delegates presented the 800-word document, which addressed seven areas of discrimination against women in Canada, including female workers under federal jurisdiction, to the prime minister’s designate.²⁷

²³ Doris Anderson, “The Strange Case of Policewoman Beckett,” *Chatelaine* 41:4 (April 1968): 3.

²⁴ Judy LaMarsh, *Memoirs of a Bird in a Gilded Cage* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1968), 302.

²⁵ Franca Iacovetta, quoted in Marlene Epp, *Women Without Men: Mennonite Refugees of the Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002), 116. Also see Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour: Women and Work in Post-war Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 259; Anne Phillips, *Democracy and Difference* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1993), 107.

²⁶ Cerise Morris, “‘Determination and Thoroughness’: The Movement for a Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada,” *Atlantis* 5:2 (Spring 1980): 13.

²⁷ Morris, “‘Determination and Thoroughness’,” 13.

However, Laura Sabia, president of the Canadian Federation of University Women (CFUW), grew impatient over the government's continued indifference to their request. On 5 January 1967, Sabia impulsively told journalist Barry Craig during an interview that the CEWC would march three million women to protest in Ottawa if the government refused to grant a royal commission into women's rights. The next day, the Toronto *Globe and Mail* contained a front page headline that read, "Women's march may back call for rights probe," and Craig quoted Sabia's threat. Judy LaMarsh, the only female cabinet minister in the Liberal government and a CEWC ally, later reported that Pearson was sufficiently "frightened" by the report that he wanted to "re-open" talks regarding a commission on women's status.²⁸ Some feminists involved in the CEWC at the time viewed this incident as the turning point in their agitation for women's rights.²⁹ The idea of three million organized women marching on Ottawa in protest transgressed conventional understandings of marching as an exclusively male, militaristic activity. The lobbying efforts of the CEWC proved fruitful and on 3 February 1967, the prime minister announced in the House of Commons that the government had decided to establish the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada (RCSW).³⁰

The RCSW began a series of public hearings held between April and October of 1968 in numerous locations across the country. They received a total of 468 briefs and some 1,000 letters of opinion from individuals and organizations in addition to submissions from 890 witnesses.³¹ In their final report released in December 1970, the commissioners made 167 recommendations that clearly documented women's concerns over inequality between the sexes in Canadian society. However, it was the RCSW's recommendations concerning the RCMP that would challenge the masculine foundations of the police force. The commissioners noted that, although policewomen

²⁸ Morris, "'Determination and Thoroughness'," 15. Florence Bird, chair of the RCSW, commented years later that LaMarsh's pressure tactics inside the cabinet were more important in gaining a royal commission than Sabia's threatened march on Parliament Hill. Morris, "'Determination and Thoroughness'," 16. The fight for equal rights for women exacted a toll on LaMarsh who did not seek a third term as a Member of Parliament. LaMarsh, *Memoirs of a Bird in a Gilded Cage*, 302.

²⁹ Eberts, "'Write It For the Women': 6-13.

³⁰ Right Hon. L.B. Pearson, "Announcement of Establishment of Royal Commission to Study Status," House of Commons Debates, 3 February 1967, 12613. Order in Council PC 1967-312 was approved by the Governor General on 16 February 1967.

³¹ *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1970): x. Hereinafter referred to as *Report of RCSW*.

were common in municipal forces in Canada, the RCMP had “remained strictly a male preserve.”³² They recommended that “enlistment in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police be open to women.”³³

The instrumental role played by the RCSW in changing the hiring policies of the RCMP cannot be underestimated for it served as an important catalyst for change.³⁴ The RCMP began to look into the possibility of hiring women as police officers three months before the release of the RCSW’s *Final Report* to the public.³⁵ There is no direct evidence to suggest that a specific event, politician, women’s group, or media report inordinately influenced the RCMP to reconsider its hiring practices. Senior RCMP officers interviewed for this study do not recall the decision being made in reaction to outside political or social pressure – only that it was inevitable, a decision whose time had come.³⁶ Indeed, Superintendent William MacRae, the training officer at the academy, insisted during several interviews with journalists that “I am gratified no one pressured the RCMP into recruiting women. It was a timely thing and the RCMP simply realized there is a definite place for women within the force.”³⁷ In contrast, Insp. J.J. Poirier of the RCMP’s Information Division commented to journalists that “[a]llowing women into the force was the result of a series of pressures, including the evolution of women’s roles” and that the “federal study on the status of women played a part and we have been getting a lot of questions from women about why they weren’t allowed to

³² *Report of the RCSW*, 133.

³³ *Report of the RCSW*, 134. The release of the final report made international headlines. For example, see Jay Walz, “Ottawa Panel Urges Women’s Equality,” *New York Times*, 8 December 1970.

³⁴ Frances Heidensohn writes that a Royal Commission in Britain sped women’s entry into policing in 1929. In the United States, where there was no government intervention, a strong policewomen’s movement facilitated women’s entry into the occupation decades before the RCMP’s decision. Francis Heidensohn, *Women in Control?: The Role of Women in Law Enforcement* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1990), 47.

³⁵ The RCMP maintained that they had conceived of and begun to study the issue before the commission published their recommendations. See “Policewomen, Why Not?,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, 37:7-8 (1975): 3.

³⁶ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008; Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

³⁷ Marsha Erb, “Women RCMP Officers Inevitable: MacRae,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 8 November 1974. Also in Liz Primeau, “They Always Get Their Person,” *The Vancouver Sun Weekend Magazine* 25:11, 15 March 1975.

join.”³⁸ And Insp. G.R. Crosse commented to one journalist that increasing pressure from women’s groups was a factor.³⁹

One high-ranking commanding officer stationed in Ottawa during discussions about recruiting female applicants recalled that the RCSW “must have had some influence, but it had no direct influence. It wasn’t something that pushed us. But it certainly had some influence, just hearing them talk about it.” He also commented that the issue of women in the RCMP was discussed with Solicitor General Warren Allmand, who “didn’t have anything against it that I remembered, but he reserved judgment on the final decision, so I don’t recall him arguing against it.” In the opinion of this senior officer, Allmand appeared “ambivalent” about the issue and was leaving the decision up to the RCMP.⁴⁰ However, one corporal interviewed for this study was convinced that the RCMP was told by Allmand to make a decision regarding the hiring of women; they had waited long enough.⁴¹ In his opinion, it was a very political decision that emanated from the solicitor general’s office.

Women who were interviewed for this research agreed that external pressure, particularly the findings of the RCSW and the approach of International Women’s Year, was instrumental in pressuring the police force. Joyce Bennett maintained that, “left on its own, I don’t believe the RCMP would have acted” to hire women, and there was “no question” that the RCSW was the impetus. Bennett cited Laura Sabia and Florence Bird as central figures in pressuring the government for reforms. She also believed that there was a “bias” in the RCMP that women were not “up to being” full members of the police force and that they were unable to perform police duties.⁴² According to Allison Palmer,

³⁸ “Ms to Join the Crimebusters,” *The Province* (Vancouver), 25 May 1974.

³⁹ Ruth Warick, “Women Join Ranks,” *The Leader-Post* (Regina), 20 September 1974.

⁴⁰ Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

⁴¹ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

⁴² Joyce Bennett, interview with author, 10 October 2008.

the fact that other police forces (such as the Edmonton, Alberta, city police) were hiring women also added to the political pressure.⁴³ Palmer stated,

I really think that they finally recognized that they had to; that they were missing out basically is what I think. They were going to be forced into hiring women. I don't know; that's just my personal opinion. But I think it got to the point that they were going to have to accept women because there were going to be women who were gonna apply.⁴⁴

Carolyn Harper agreed, commenting that the fact that other police departments were opening up to women influenced the decision, as did a declaration by the United Nations (UN) proclaiming 1975 as International Women's Year. Harper speculated, "It had to have been a political decision somewhere in Ottawa."⁴⁵ Marianne Robson also observed that the RCMP was under pressure by the federal government as International Women's Year approached: "They were mandated by the government that they were going to take women because of pressure from the United Nations."⁴⁶ While these comments represent personal opinion, there is little doubt that the commission's findings were highly influential and that Canadians were well aware of the recommendations that were made.

Mounting External Pressure

While the RCMP continued to study how best to utilize women, outside pressure on the police force continued to grow. In March 1973, the attorney general of British

⁴³ One male RCMP officer involved in discussions about the hiring of women used the example of Edmonton's female officers to argue for the inclusion of women in the RCMP. He recalled enlisting the help of Edmonton's female detectives when he was stationed with the RCMP in that city: "They were good. They helped me out on more than one occasion. Drugs, rape cases, dealing with juvenile girls." He also remembered their marital status and physical size: "They were single and they were big girls. Probably five foot ten inches" tall. Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

⁴⁴ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

⁴⁵ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010. In 1972, the twenty-ninth session of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted Resolution No. 3275 proclaiming 1975 as International Women's Year. By ratifying the agreement, Canada was obligated to promote equality of opportunity and treatment for all employees with a view to eliminating employment discrimination in Canada. United Nations General Assembly Resolution #3275 (XXIX), "International Women's Year," 10 December 1974. <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/29/ares29.html> [accessed 17 November 2008].

⁴⁶ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

Columbia, Alex Macdonald, suggested that the police force hire women for traffic patrol, freeing male officers to deal with more “serious crime such as the illicit drug trade.” The RCMP responded that, although the police force utilized women in laboratory and research work, the “idea of expanding women’s roles is not being considered at this time.”⁴⁷ In contrast, Washington, DC, had already become the first American city to hire women for patrol work. In 1971, the municipal department assigned twenty-five women to patrol work and hired another 100 women as patrol officers by 1972.⁴⁸ New York City assigned women to patrol work for the first time in 1972.⁴⁹ In Wales, the South Wales Constabulary had employed policewomen in uniformed work as well as in its criminal investigation, traffic, and drug sections since 1969.⁵⁰ Canadian politicians were likely cognizant of the use of women in other jurisdictions when assessing the RCMP’s hesitancy to employ women as police officers.

The National Council of Women (NCW) was also pushing the RCMP to accept female applicants for uniformed positions. In June 1973, delegates from British Columbia’s local and provincial councils presented a number of resolutions to the federal government, including the resolution that enlistment in the RCMP be “open to female applicants on the same basis as male” applicants.⁵¹ That year, Commr. W.L. Higgitt finally established a committee to examine the possibility of hiring women. The committee consisted of four senior commanding officers who studied the issue “for a couple of weeks” before reporting back to the commissioner’s planning board on their findings.⁵² In their final report, they recommended the hiring of female police officers.

⁴⁷ “RCMP Won’t Be Hiring More Women,” *The Province* (Vancouver), 7 March 1973.

⁴⁸ Susan E. Martin, “Sexual Politics in the Workplace: The Interactional World of Policewomen,” *Symbolic Interaction* 1:2 (Spring 1978): 45.

⁴⁹ Kathy Burke and Neal Hirschfeld, *Detective: The Inspirational Story of the Trailblazing Woman Cop Who Wouldn’t Quit* (New York: Scribner, 2006), 47.

⁵⁰ Sarah Davies, “Police Force Recalls Days When Female Officers Were ‘Of No Advantage,’” 8 March 2013. <http://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/2013/03/08.html> [accessed 20 March 2013].

⁵¹ “Women Seek Equality in RCMP Enlistment,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 9 June 1973; also quoted in Dawson, *The Mountie*, 149.

⁵² The commissioner’s planning board consisted of the commissioner and his deputy commissioners. They discussed problems in the police force, made policy changes, and issued new directives to the appropriate directorates and divisions. Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008. The members of the planning board also went on regular retreats with the solicitor general to discuss “the different problems of the force.” Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

The committee found that other police forces that had hired women found them to be effective as detectives investigating major crimes, and in dealing with cases of rape and crimes involving juvenile girls. They also included a few recommendations for developing a uniform and a women's kit.⁵³

In September, one deputy commissioner observed, "I am satisfied that in most large police forces throughout the Western world the useful role of policewomen has been proven, and for this reason a study must be made at this time to determine in what area we could use the services of women in an active police capacity."⁵⁴ His comment draws attention to the fact that the terms "policewoman" and "female constable" were often used interchangeably at the time. Policewomen had been in existence until the 1970s, when police agencies across North America began to hire women as full-fledged constables.⁵⁵ Many departments transitioned the policewomen already working for them into the rank of constable, performing exactly the same work with the same pay. By 1973, the New York Police Department (NYPD) had completely abolished the use of the terms "policewoman" and "patrolman" and replaced those titles with the gender-neutral title "police officer."⁵⁶ The distinction between policewoman and a female police constable is an important one because it partly explains the RCMP's uncertainty over the most effective way to employ women. Given that the RCMP did not employ policewomen in the preceding decades, commanding officers had little experience in determining their effectiveness in performing police duties.

In the meantime, the Canadian armed forces began to employ women in July 1971 "on the same basis as men in all classifications and trades except combat arms,

⁵³ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

⁵⁴ Quoted in S/Sgt. S.E. Stark, *The Role of Female Constables in "E" Division*, RCMP "E" Division Staffing and Personnel Branch (April 1986), 1. Hereinafter referred to as *The Role of Female Constables*.

⁵⁵ For example, by 1968 New York City employed 338 women, or 1 percent of the total force, in a variety of policing roles. Of that number, "261 were policewomen, 59 were detectives, 16 were sergeants, and 2 were lieutenants." Burke and Hirschfeld, *Detective*, 327. Also see Daniel J. Bell, "Policewomen: Myths and Reality," *Journal of Police Science and Administration* 10:1 (1982) for a more thorough synopsis about the use of the terms.

⁵⁶ Burke and Hirschfeld, *Detective*, 328.

sea-going duties and isolated positions.”⁵⁷ The decision to open up trades to women was the result of growing public and government pressure to reform the military following the findings of the RCSW, which argued that Canadian women should have the same opportunity to benefit from the scientific and technological education that the military provided. The commissioners further recommended the admittance of women to the military college and the enlistment of married women into the armed forces.⁵⁸ The commissioners stopped short, however, of recommending the full participation of women in combat duty. Accordingly, the armed forces opened up all military roles to women except primary combat roles. The exclusionary decision was based on the belief that a lack of physical strength posed a threat to the cohesion and safety of combat units on the battlefield, a highly gendered space considered the heart of masculine identity and military service.⁵⁹

Despite cautious advances being made by women in the armed forces, the RCMP remained undecided about the nature of women’s role in policing. Essentially, the police force was trying to decide whether women should be engaged as policewomen with limited duties that resembled social work, as specialized plainclothes operatives, or as uniformed police constables on an equal basis with men. The RCMP developed a questionnaire for distribution to police agencies across Canada, the United States, and Europe to ascertain in what capacities they employed women.⁶⁰ Responses to the questionnaire were inconclusive, according to the police force, for two reasons. The first was that other police agencies had only recently integrated women into the rank-and-file, even though some had employed policewomen in specialized roles since the beginning of the century. Secondly, the RCMP considered the “extensive diversification and

⁵⁷ The armed forces determined that “approximately 10,000 positions could be filled by women without affecting the operational/combat role of the Forces,” suggesting that the military sought to ameliorate recruitment shortages by hiring women, thus freeing up men for combat duty. By September 1974, there were “2,695 service women, including 597 officers” in the armed forces. Marc Lalonde, *Status of Women in Canada: 1975* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), 33. The armed forces began training its first female recruits at CFB Cornwallis in Nova Scotia in 1951. See http://www.cornwallismuseum.ca/About_cornwallis.html [accessed 23 July 2012].

⁵⁸ RCSW, *Final Report*, 136.

⁵⁹ Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn, “Women in the Canadian Forces: Between Legal and Social Integration,” *Current Sociology* 50 (2002): 651. It was not until 1988, following a discrimination complaint, that a Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ordered the Canadian military to fully integrate women into regular and reserve forces, including in combat roles. The following year, Private Heather Erxleben became Canada’s first regular force infantry soldier. *Ibid*, 663.

⁶⁰ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 1.

extremes of working conditions in the Force had few if any parallels within the remainder of the police community,” making it difficult to make comparisons.⁶¹

The hesitancy over “extremes” in working conditions was governed by gendered assumptions about the female body. How would women respond to working and living in isolated northern areas? Could they conduct dangerous patrols? Could they meet the rigorous physical demands of policing an isolated outpost? Perhaps notions of chivalry and gentlemanly behaviour connected with the RCMP’s heroic image informed the indecisiveness of the commanding officers. More likely, however, the hesitancy to engage female constables stemmed from an over-emphasis on the importance of physical strength and size as a necessary prerequisite for effective policing, especially in remote areas. Dave Moore observed that before 1974, the RCMP made a practice of sending their largest and strongest male officers to the north or to mining or logging communities to enforce the law and control drunk and brawling men. For Moore, these were places where you could get into a fight “every night if you wanted to” and where “you could get into a fight every Saturday night whether you wanted to or not.” He maintained that the RCMP tried to find the “most capable people. If you were big and strong, you went to Prince George, Prince Rupert [British Columbia], Flin Flon, or Thompson, Manitoba, because of the mines there.”⁶² Male police officers were posted in northern communities based on the belief that their physical stature was an asset during violent altercations between men and could even act as a deterrent to fighting.

In contrast, the commissioners of the RCSW “were convinced that enlisted women could make a special contribution, particularly in the North, in other aspects of police work.”⁶³ “Other aspects” may have been a reference to RCMP dealings with female prisoners. The commissioners received several briefs from women objecting to the fact that “women who have been apprehended are sometimes searched by male police officers or constables.”⁶⁴ Commissioners Bird and Lange in particular were adamant that the voices of Aboriginal women be heard by the RCSW.⁶⁵ Many reported

⁶¹ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 1.

⁶² Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

⁶³ *Report of the RCSW*, 134.

⁶⁴ *Report of the RCSW*, 134.

⁶⁵ Joan Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 239.

abusive treatment by members of the RCMP. As we will see below, their concerns were not unfounded. The commissioners determined that female RCMP officers would be more effective during interactions with female prisoners in isolated and northern detachments and on reserves.

The commanding officers of the RCMP were not as convinced as the RCSW commissioners, however, and by 1973 studies were ongoing. John Munro, the minister responsible for the Status of Women, commented in his annual report that year that “a study is being conducted into Force requirements to determine where females, if engaged as regular police officers, could be used to best advantage.”⁶⁶ The commissioner informed the solicitor general that, “while we have recognized the principle that there is room for female police officers, we have yet to define the specific role to be played.”⁶⁷ One highly effective role for women in the RCMP was as surveillance specialists. Other police forces already understood the effectiveness of women for undercover work; by the 1960s a number of police departments in North America had been experimenting with using women in plainclothes capacities. In 1967, Theresa Melchionne, the D/Commr. of Community Relations in the New York City police department, wrote about the effectiveness of women working undercover. She argued that the “public at large does not perceive women as police officers. Nor does the criminal,” giving female officers a distinct advantage over their male counterparts. Melchionne advocated for the use of women “as decoys” for a number of undercover operations, including gambling, criminal surveillance, drug enforcement, and robberies.⁶⁸ It was a double-edged sword: women were less likely to be suspected as police officers while conducting plainclothes work, but they were not accepted as figures of authority when dressed in a uniform and performing police duties.

The RCMP began to hire women as civilian members of the RCMP for specialized plain-clothes surveillance duties in 1966. Jean Adams was the second

⁶⁶ John C. Munro, *Status of Women in Canada: 1973* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1973), 22. The question of when women were going to be hired as police officers in the RCMP was raised several times in the House of Commons in 1973. See *House of Commons Debates: Official Report*, vol. III (1973), 2813; vol. V (1973), 4611.

⁶⁷ Commr. W.L. Higgitt, quoted in Dawson, *The Mountie*, 149.

⁶⁸ Theresa M. Melchionne, “Current Status and Problems of Women Police,” *The Journal of Criminal Law, Criminology, and Police Science* 58:2 (June 1967): 259.

woman hired by the RCMP to work for Security Service (SS) in the section's new surveillance unit that had been established one year earlier in Ottawa, Ontario. SS surveillants were responsible for gathering intelligence on foreign diplomats and spies operating in Canada, as well Canadian citizens suspected of subversive political activity at home. Adams recalled tracking Russian spies operating in Ottawa, Ontario, as well as conducting surveillance on Canadians whom the RCMP suspected of being involved in the murder of Pierre Laporte and the kidnapping of James Cross during the October crisis of 1970 (discussed below).⁶⁹

In general, suspects attempting to detect surveillance looked for men who were physically imposing, as all Mounties were at the time. In contrast, the body of the male surveillance specialist was "relatively innocuous in appearance, which is another reason why they [we]re civilians and not Mounties."⁷⁰ Suspects who were being watched shared this understanding of a hierarchy of police bodies. Not only did they assume that shorter men were not Mounties, but they also assumed that the RCMP did not hire women. It was an assumption that made female surveillants especially effective at evading detection. Despite the successes of women operating in plainclothes capacities since

⁶⁹ Jean Adams, email communication to author, 6 April 2011. Contrary to Adams's account, the RCMP's website lists 1971 as the year that women first began to serve as special constables and civilian members. See "First Female Milestones," <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/recruiting-recrutement/fem/hist-eng.htm> [accessed 21 March 2012]. According to journalist John Sawatsky, the formation of informal surveillance units within the RCMP began during the Cold War period in the early 1950s, but a formal surveillance section within Security Service did not emerge until 1955. John Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows: The RCMP Security Service* (Toronto: Doubleday Canada, 1980), 34.

⁷⁰ Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 35. Civilian members were considered members of the police force at the time, but were not considered "real" Mounties, as Sawatsky suggests. However, they were also governed by the *RCMP Act*, unlike public servants who were governed by the *Public Service Employment Act* (PSEA). Public servants, in general, worked in various administrative capacities for the RCMP. "Memorandum," A/OIC Staffing and Personnel to Director Public Service Personnel, AM 1970 – Amendment to the *Public Service Employment Act*, RCMP file GGP 602-1-3 (93-06-25). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08. Surveillance operatives working for Security Service were eventually promoted from the rank of civilian member to special constable in 1973. All special constables within the RCMP converted to "regular member" status, or the rank of constable, in 1990. "Historical Evidence of A.M. Bulletin About Conversion of S/Csts. to Cst.," RCMP file G524-17 (92-11-24). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

the mid-1960s, however, the RCMP remained unsure of whether their success could extend to uniformed police functions.⁷¹

More External Pressure: The Media and Negative Publicity

While the commanding officers of the RCMP grappled with the question of whether to recruit women as uniformed police officers, external pressure continued in the form of revisionist histories about the police force. The romantic image of the RCMP as an honest, incorruptible, and efficient law enforcement service was called into question by Lorne and Caroline Brown, whose account of RCMP history undermined official representations organized by the police force. The Browns discussed the origins and early history of the NWMP, the relationship between the RCMP and the labour unrest of the interwar years, and the force's relationship with minority groups and youth involved in the protest movements of the 1960s. They positioned the 1960s as the time when the image of the RCMP experienced "a marked decline, as did that of other police forces" as young people critically questioned and protested many aspects of society, including the activities of the police – and with good reason according to the Browns. In 1971, Robert Eadie revealed in an interview with the CBC that he had been coerced by the RCMP into providing them with information on the illicit drug trade in Cornwall, Ontario. Eadie, who was just eighteen years old at the time, claimed that the RCMP had threatened him with a return to prison if he did not inform on drug dealers. Eadie complied and became a paid informant for the RCMP until he was beaten up by six men and the RCMP refused to provide him with protection.⁷² Eadie's claims did little to reinforce the romanticized image of the men of the RCMP, and the Brown's version of RCMP history did not portray Canada's federal police force in a positive light.

⁷¹ In 1975, the minister responsible for the status of women commented in his annual report that "[a]lthough the Force had previously employed women in a number of specialized functions, until [1974] uniform positions had not been open to them." Marc Lalonde, *Status of Women in Canada: 1975* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), 34.

⁷² L. and C. Brown, *An Unauthorized History*, 138-39; 143-45. The Browns' work received national coverage when CBC Radio broadcasted a debate between Lorne Brown and retired D/Commr. William H. Kelly in a program titled, "RCMP's Reputation Debated." Brown and Kelly argued "vigorously" about the RCMP's image versus the reality of the activities of the police force. "RCMP's Reputation Debated," CBC Radio [originally aired 10 June 1973] http://archives.cbc.ca/society/crime_justice/clips/169231.html [accessed 5 March 2012].

A growing radicalism across Canada from a number of organized movements demanding social reforms also received media attention, as did unfavourable accounts about the RCMP's response to those movements. As Dominique Clément states, "the RCMP directed an extensive surveillance program against social movement organizations across the country in the 1970s."⁷³ Organized labour, women's rights groups, gay and lesbian rights groups, and student movements in Canadian universities were the subjects of RCMP surveillance.⁷⁴ For example, members of the RCMP infiltrated meetings of the Vancouver Women's Caucus and followed its Abortion Caravan as it travelled across the country to protest Canada's abortion law in May 1970.⁷⁵ The women's movement was also the focus of the RCMP's Security Service, which compiled biographical sketches of leaders, read the movement's literature, cultivated informants, and monitored marches and rallies.⁷⁶ Interestingly, the RCMP's surveillance was not the result of the public protests that the women had organized, but was based on the fear that communists had infiltrated the movement. The RCMP's attitude that the movement attracted women from a lower echelon of society was a class-based and highly gendered assumption that sidestepped the real social and political issues that the women were challenging.⁷⁷ The RCMP did not take the women or their political activities seriously because they "couldn't break free of the sort of sexist stereotypes they had of them."⁷⁸ It was an indication of the conservatism that characterized the RCMP's understandings of a woman's proper role in society, an approach that would later complicate the successful integration of women into the police force.

⁷³ Dominique Clément, "The October Crisis of 1970: Human Rights Abuses Under the *War Measures Act*," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 42:2 (Spring 2008): 176.

⁷⁴ For a recent analysis on RCMP surveillance activity on university campuses see Reg Whitaker, Gregory S. Kealey, and Andrew Parnaby, *Secret Service: Political Policing in Canada From the Fenians to Fortress America* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012), 342-47.

⁷⁵ Christabelle Sethna and Steve Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations: The Vancouver Women's Caucus, the Abortion Caravan, and the RCMP," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90:3 (September 2009): 486.

⁷⁶ "RCMP Spied on Rita MacNeil, Feminists in 1970s," *The Canadian Press*, 4 August 2008, <http://www.ctvnews.ca/rempe-spied-on-rita-macneil-feminists-in-1970s-1.313362.html> [accessed 17 April 2013].

⁷⁷ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 478.

⁷⁸ Sethna and Hewitt, "Clandestine Operations," 478.

The RCMP also played a significant role in monitoring, intimidating, and arresting human rights advocates and political activists who were considered a threat to the power of the state. Mounties were engaged in a number of illegal activities against Québec separatists in the 1960s, including the arrest and incarceration of suspects for days without charge or access to a lawyer.⁷⁹ Indeed, the human rights of Canadians were not a consideration when it came to state security matters in the post-Cold War era. Although some provinces had crafted legislation that served as a forerunner to later human rights codes by the mid-twentieth century, the federal government did not develop human rights codes or appoint the Canadian Human Rights Commission until 1977. As well, the Canadian constitution had not yet been repatriated from Britain and recalibrated as the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The media's coverage of police abuses of power during the 1960s was clearly problematic for commanding officers, who were concerned with the eroding image of the police force. In 1961, RCMP commissioner C.W. Harvison, in an address to the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police, lobbied for the formation of a committee to study the "underlying reasons for the growth of unwarranted criticism and to study desirable counteraction" to the "fairly widespread idea that policemen are less interested in human rights, fairness, and justice than other groups."⁸⁰ And in 1968, Superintendent E.A.F. Holm, in a paper that anticipated the appointment of media liaison officers, wrote,

[T]here has to be a continuing campaign of large proportions launched to inform the public as to the actual image of the police, what they stand for, and particularly the need for public cooperation and citizen responsibility. Without the confidence, respect and assistance of the general public, the police cannot function in the manner expected Police departments would do well to select experienced, articulate members to engage in regular contacts with the Press and Public and to spread the gospel of sound police public cooperation.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Clément, "The October Crisis of 1970," 163.

⁸⁰ C.W. Harvison quoted in "Canadian Chiefs of Police Conference," *RCMP Quarterly* 26:3 (January 1961): 200.

⁸¹ Supt. E.A.F. Holm, "Police Image: A Paper Given at the Annual Dinner of the B.C. Provincial Police Held in Victoria on October 19, 1968," *Scarlet and Gold*, 50th Anniversary ed., (1968): 44-45.

Despite, or perhaps because of, the RCMP's unwillingness to acknowledge abuses of their power at the time, the media continued to inform Canadians about illicit RCMP activities, exerting pressure on the police force to reform. In particular, there was a great deal of criticism in the media over the RCMP's misuse of power after the federal government invoked the *War Measures Act* during the October Crisis in Québec in 1970.⁸² The Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), a group of Québec nationalists, kidnapped James Cross, a diplomat with the British Consulate in Montreal, on 5 October. Five days later, they kidnapped the provincial minister of Labour, Pierre LaPorte, following the provincial government's refusal to meet FLQ demands. In response, the federal Cabinet passed emergency legislation on 16 October and invoked the *War Measures Act*, granting the police and military special powers of arrest across Canada, including the suspension of habeas corpus for detainees suspected of political insurrection.⁸³

But it was the RCMP's illegal activities following the end of the October Crisis in December 1970 that had the most serious ramifications for the police force. Over the next ten years, also known as the RCMP's "dirty tricks era," the Security Service continued to conduct a series of illegal activities against the independence movement in Québec, including illegal wiretaps, opening mail, stealing documents, conducting break-ins, bombings, and acting without search warrants.⁸⁴ On 7 December 1976, investigative journalist John Sawatsky wrote an article for the *Vancouver Sun* detailing a series of more than 400 illegal break-ins in Québec by the RCMP since 1970.⁸⁵ Sawatsky revealed that knowledge of the cover-up extended to the upper echelons of the RCMP in Ottawa. The revelations resulted in the formation of both a federal and a provincial

⁸² See <http://www.rcmp-grc.ca/hist/comms.html> [accessed 8 April 2010]

⁸³ Clément, "The October Crisis of 1970," 167-68. According to Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, the RCMP was not asked for input into the Cabinet's decision to invoke emergency powers under the *War Measures Act*. Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 288-89.

⁸⁴ Clément, "The October Crisis of 1970," 176. For a detailed discussion on RCMP "dirty tricks," see Whitaker, Kealey and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 305-13. Also Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 238-51.

⁸⁵ John Sawatsky, "Trail of Break-Ins Leads to RCMP Cover-Up," *Vancouver Sun*, 7 December 1976. Sawatsky won the governor general's Michener Award for Meritorious Public Service Journalism for the article.

commission to investigate; both reported their findings in 1981.⁸⁶ The provincial commission, known as the Keable Commission, found that the RCMP had conducted an unjustified attack on the civil liberties of Québec citizens. The federal commission, known as the McDonald Commission, recommended that the RCMP's Security Service be replaced with a civilian agency, leading to the formation of the Canadian Security and Intelligence Service (CSIS) in 1984.

Surprisingly, the image of the RCMP remained largely unaltered in the minds of many Canadians despite media revelations of the force's illicit activities. It did begin to shift slightly, however, as evident in lower recruitment numbers in the early 1970s. According to historian Daniel Francis,

[T]he Mounties' image began to tarnish as a series of public inquiries revealed the extent to which the force was breaking the law in its relentless pursuit of the 'enemy within.' Gradually it came out that the RCMP was tampering with mail, burglarizing the offices of perfectly legitimate political parties . . . spying on Aboriginal and black Canadians, and generally behaving like dirty tricksters instead of the incorruptible lawmen of legend.⁸⁷

While the image may have begun to tarnish, it still enjoyed the support of many Canadians. By 1976, politicians remained hesitant to question the RCMP's methods in the House of Commons despite the negative media accounts. According to John Sawatsky, "Public reaction, from opinion surveys to letters to the editor, suggested that Canadians supported the RCMP despite illegal acts. During parliamentary debate on the issue, the Opposition parties received criticism from constituents while the government got letters of congratulations for defending the RCMP. It was this unquestioning public support for the RCMP that caused Opposition parties to mute their criticism."⁸⁸ Undoubtedly, those Canadians who were the subject of illegal RCMP activities would not have been in agreement with the tactics that were used against them. However, Sawatsky's findings indicated that for many Canadians, especially those outside

⁸⁶ During both commissions, the RCMP's surveillance of gay and lesbian movements in Canada also emerged. Gary Kinsman and Patrizia Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers: National Security as Sexual Regulation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 329-30; 336-40.

⁸⁷ Daniel Francis, *National Dreams: Myth, Memory, and Canadian History* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1997), 50.

⁸⁸ Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 281, f.n. 5.

Québec, the misuse of authority by the RCMP following the October Crisis did not entirely damage the force's trustworthy image. This level of public support shaped and reinforced the nature of the organization as a racist and gendered instrument of the state whose power relied not only on the interests of the capitalist class, but on the continued cooperation and endorsement of the dominant white, English-speaking culture.

It was against this backdrop that the RCMP faced its most serious public relations challenge to date: the public criticism of the RCMP by a former Mountie. In July 1972, Jack Ramsay broke ranks and publicly criticized RCMP policies and operational procedures in a damaging article that he wrote for *Maclean's* magazine. Titled "My Case Against the RCMP," the article was an unprecedented public airing of a number of grievances by an insider that further tarnished the image of the police force.⁸⁹ Ramsay described what he perceived to be abusive training methods at the RCMP's academy, racism among RCMP officers, and the police force's antiquated marriage policies, low pay, militaristic rank structure, and poor morale among the rank-and-file. For Ramsay, the RCMP was expending a great deal of energy projecting its former, idealized image, an activity that sheltered the force's commanding officers from both the real world and their own consciences.⁹⁰

Ramsay's own illegal activities, however, would not be exposed until 1999. That year he was charged and later convicted of the attempted rape of a fourteen-year-old Cree girl he had incarcerated at the RCMP barracks in Pelican Narrows, Saskatchewan, in 1969. At the time of the attempted rape, Ramsay was a corporal at the detachment.⁹¹

⁸⁹ As early as 1875, members of the police force were prohibited under the *RCMP Act* from communicating with the media on work-related issues without permission. Officers could be fined a month's pay or serve six months in jail for violating this directive. It was a policy that continued in various forms throughout the twentieth century. The commissioner's Standing Orders of 1970 (Section 4, no. 1156) for example, featured five new directives forbidding Mounties from communicating with the media without the permission or involvement of a commanding officer or the commissioner. Standing Orders quoted in L. and C. Brown, *An Unauthorized History*, 127-28.

⁹⁰ Ramsay, "My Case Against the RCMP," 58-74.

⁹¹ On appeal in 2001, the verdict was overturned and a new trial was ordered. Ramsay then pleaded guilty to the lesser charge of indecent assault and was sentenced to one year of probation and 120 hours of community service. In a separate incident, Ramsay was also alleged to have unlawfully confined a 15 year old Cree girl at the barracks in Pelican Narrows. He was acquitted of this charge in 2000. Christie Blatchford, "Peeling Back an MP's Past Lives," *National Post*, 22 November 1999; Jill Mahoney, "Former Reform MP Sues RCMP, Crown," *The Globe and Mail*, 27 May 2002.

In January 1973, Cst. Allan Howard was charged with indecent sexual assault against a Métis woman in Saskatchewan, whom he forced to commit a sexual act with him while she was incarcerated. Howard pleaded guilty to the charge and was dismissed from the RCMP and fined \$1,000.00.⁹² That same year, the president of the Saskatchewan Indian and Métis Society complained to the federal government that incarcerated Aboriginal women were being sexually harassed by members of the RCMP.⁹³ One male narrator interviewed for this research recalled that in the 1960s, this problem often surfaced with single men who were posted to isolated northern communities. According to Dave Moore, a corporal working at a detachment in the far north impregnated an Aboriginal girl. It was unclear whether the sexual intercourse was consensual or whether it was rape. But the event was significant enough that the RCMP officer was transferred and barred from further postings to northern detachments for the remainder of his career.⁹⁴

These incidents reveal that some Mounties regulated and controlled the Aboriginal population through the use of rape and sexual assault against women. The violent abuse of power that some Mounties adopted was made possible by the structure of the police force, which assumed the superiority of white, male officers over Aboriginal people. The powerful image of the RCMP as trustworthy and honest, and the authority they wielded in their communities, discouraged Aboriginal women from making accusations against those police officers who abused their power through rape or sexual assault. As a result, they were forced to silently endure sexual coercion, unless, as was the case with Ramsay's victims, they spoke out as mature women decades later. Incidents of sexual violence were aided by geographical space and isolated postings where abuse could occur without fear of discovery or consequences for the police officers involved.

⁹² L. and C. Brown, *An Unauthorized History*, 149. Also "RCMP Harassing Indians, Committing Sexual Offences Against Women, Head of Group Charges," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 January 1973.

⁹³ The relationship between the RCMP and Aboriginal groups in Saskatchewan at the time was characterized by the president of the Society as "tense." Rumours circulated that "more radical groups were planning to shoot an RCMP officer during the force's centennial celebrations" in retaliation. The RCMP "denied any knowledge of incidents that may have taken place between members of the RCMP and the Indian and Métis community." See "RCMP Harassing Indians."

⁹⁴ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 December 2008.

As 1973 drew to a close, the RCMP was concluding its nation-wide centennial celebrations. The entire centenary campaign was, as Michael Dawson points out, designed to reinforce the myth of manliness, honour, and duty without the “imperial fervour that had once given those penchants an antimodern meaning.”⁹⁵ That imperial fervour was rooted in the final decades of the nineteenth century when the scarlet-clad Mountie on horseback represented deference, loyalty, and adventure within Queen Victoria's empire. Indeed, during the Queen's diamond jubilee celebrations in London, England, in 1897, a small contingent of NWMP officers on horseback made a distinct impression on British crowds with their red tunics, white gauntlets, knee-high boots, and Stetson hats. The Mounties embodied the romance of the Queen's empire, and the male NWMP body was a site where imperial and colonial power was imagined and exercised.⁹⁶ By the time of the force's centennial celebrations, however, the RCMP was attempting to distance itself from its imperialist image. The force's official history of its first one hundred years omitted the fact that the NWMP had served as a symbol of British imperialism and that Mounties had acted as agents of colonialism for the state.⁹⁷ Instead, the police force portrayed itself as a benevolent protector of Indigenous people and as playing a pivotal role in bringing law and order to a lawless region.⁹⁸

By 1973, media reports of RCMP abuses of power appeared to have had little impact on many Canadians' perceptions of the police force. Their high level of trust in the RCMP and their veneration of the force's iconic image made it difficult for information about abuses of authority to be widely accepted. Despite the RCMP's illegal activities, media reports did little to deter men, and later women, from applying to work for an organization that was proven at times to be violent, racist, oppressive, and above the law.

⁹⁵ Dawson, *The Mountie*, 98.

⁹⁶ Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, “Introduction: Bodies, Empires, and World Histories,” *Bodies in Contact: Rethinking Colonial Encounters in World History* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 6.

⁹⁷ Historian Greg Marquis comments that the men of the NWMP were “bush rangers, colonization agents, roving bureaucrats, and sometimes policemen” who, by the end of the nineteenth century, were an essential part of the “institutional structure of settler society.” Greg Marquis, “Policing Two Imperial Frontiers: The Royal Irish Constabulary and the North-West Mounted Police,” *Laws and Societies in the Canadian Prairie West, 1670-1940*, eds. Louis A. Knafla and Jonathan Swainger (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005), 204.

⁹⁸ S.W. Horrall, *The Pictorial History of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police* (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Limited, 1973), 14-22.

Internal Pressure: The Movement for Unionization

In addition to external pressures, there were a number of internal pressures facing the commanding officers of the RCMP in the 1970s that had a direct bearing on the decision to hire the female police body. One pressure was a shortage of police officers to meet its contractual obligations with the provinces.⁹⁹ Another was growing labour unrest within the RCMP. In the spring of 1974, thousands of RCMP officers were meeting in major centres across the country to discuss the possibility of forming a union. At the time, members of the RCMP were governed by Order-in-Council PC 2213 (7 October 1918), which prohibited them from forming or joining a union.¹⁰⁰ Despite the prohibition, meetings were held to discuss a number of key issues, such as discipline, transfer policies, poor pay, a “military system of operation,” and, in particular, no compensation for overtime worked.¹⁰¹ Mounties, particularly the rank-and-file, were expected to provide free labour after regular working hours, an indication of the strength of military codes regarding the unquestioned authority of superior officers. The practice also saved the federal government significant amounts of money in wages. In capitalist economies, labour is a commodity and institutions that support the power of the capitalist class treated workers as such. Clearly the police body was viewed as both a source of labour and a commodity to the RCMP’s commanders and the state.

Who “owned” the police body was hotly contested. The labour unrest initially erupted in Vancouver on 1 May, when 250 RCMP officers met in Burnaby to vent their

⁹⁹ Insp. G.R. Crosse quoted in Ruth Warwick, “Women Join Ranks,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 September 1974. Faced with a shortage of funds, the RCMP in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, for example, were actively engaged in establishing a program to recruit and train male auxiliary police officers to work on a volunteer basis. See Jill Rafuse, “RCMP Program to Recruit Men to Act as Volunteer Policemen,” *The Chronicle-Herald* (Halifax), 14 September 1974.

¹⁰⁰ “RCMP Union Membership Illegal Under 1918 Rule,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 1 May 1974. Steve Hewitt provides a comprehensive analysis of the Order-in-Council which, he argues, transformed the RNWMP into Canada’s “permanent militia,” particularly during the strikes and labour unrest of 1918 and 1919. See Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 23-24. Also see S.W. Horrall, “The Royal North-West Mounted Police and Labour Unrest in Western Canada, 1919,” *Lawful Authority: Readings on the History of Criminal Justice in Canada*, ed. R.C. Macleod (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman, 1988), 18-33.

¹⁰¹ Peter Moon, “RCMP Morale Problems Traced to Rapid Growth,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 May 1974.

frustrations.¹⁰² The next day, more than “600 Toronto-area Mounties – nearly two-thirds the division” gathered to hear the president of the Metro Toronto Police Association urge them to form a union. When a vote was taken, 605 out of the 620 votes cast were in favour of pursuing the prospect of organizing.¹⁰³ The meeting was described by one journalist as “highly emotional.”¹⁰⁴ Eight days later, an estimated 2,500 Mounties from Ottawa and Toronto met at the Ottawa Civic Centre to agitate for change.¹⁰⁵ One journalist estimated that since the beginning of May, “more than 4,000 Mounties have attended meetings . . . to discuss the formation of an association that would allow them to negotiate collectively on their behalf.”¹⁰⁶ In response, newly appointed Commr. Maurice Nadon and D/Commr. Peter Bazowski met with representatives (some elected by rank-and-file police officers and others appointed by commanding officers) from every division across the country. They developed a fourteen-point plan for a formal employee-relations system of consultation and representation, which they called Division Staff Relations Representatives (DSRR). The proposed system stipulated that an elected representative from each division across Canada would meet with the commissioner and his deputies once a year to address personnel issues and members’ grievances. On 30 May 1974, a referendum was held across Canada asking Mounties to accept the DSRR model as an alternative to seeking unionization.¹⁰⁷ Mounties voted in favour of the DSRR

¹⁰² The men heard a speech by an “official of the Vancouver city police union,” who reported on current wage negotiations with the city of Vancouver. “Mounties Want Voice With Brass,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 2 May 1974.

¹⁰³ Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 229. Journalists at the time reported the number in attendance as more than “half of the 950 members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police stationed in Metro.” See “Metro Mounties Discuss Union at Noisy Rally,” *The Toronto Star*, 3 May 1974. Most of Canada’s municipal police departments are unionized. They also have a history of labour unrest. See Greg Marquis, *Policing Canada’s Century: A History of the Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993), 305-08.

¹⁰⁴ “Metro Mounties Discuss Union at Noisy Rally.”

¹⁰⁵ Commr. Maurice Nadon, “The Tenth Anniversary Dinner: Division Staff Relations Representatives,” May 1984. Hereinafter referred to as “Nadon Speech, 1984.” At a similar meeting in Montreal almost two weeks later, 500 RCMP officers were in attendance. Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 230.

¹⁰⁶ Moon, “RCMP Morale Problems Traced to Rapid Growth.” In early 1974, there were 13,000 men in the RCMP. “RCMP Union Membership Illegal Under 1919 Rule,” *The Vancouver Sun*, 1 May 1974.

¹⁰⁷ As a show of good faith, the commissioner sought the immediate repeal of Order-in-Council PC 2213 from the solicitor general and the federal government. The order was repealed shortly after the acceptance of the DSRR model as proposed in the referendum. “Nadon Speech, 1984”; also Sawatsky, *Men in the Shadows*, 237.

system, and the RCMP immediately gave its men a general pay increase and instituted a new policy for overtime pay.

The labour unrest within the RCMP had significant ramifications for Canadian women interested in joining the police force. During discussions on the formation of the DSRR system, the issue of hiring women surfaced. It had been four years since the RCSW had made its recommendations, and the RCMP was no closer to making a final decision. As Henri LeBlanc remembered, the “subject of women in the RCMP was one of many items on the agenda” at the early DSRR meetings and had been “discussed loosely . . . and it was up and down, up and down, and we weren’t getting anywhere.” Not everyone agreed that there was a place for women as officers with full police powers. LeBlanc recalled that “we had all kinds of soothsayers who said it will never work, we’ll have to babysit them, all this kind of talk, you know. Mostly from senior non-commissioned officers.”¹⁰⁸ The opposition of NCOs was more than simple sexism or a case of generational differences. As chapter three will show, it was also tied to the hierarchical power relations that informed the structure of the RCMP. NCOs held powerful positions in the field and were the mediators between the public and rank-and-file personnel, managing the public’s perceptions of the masculine Mountie on a daily basis. They also mediated the information that flowed between the detachment and commanding officers, who, since they were removed from the field, relied on NCOs to report on daily operations and the activities of the lower ranks. Their power enabled them to reinforce the ideas of masculinity as the dominant characteristic of the RCMP and the police force as an ideally masculine institution. Their opposition during DSRR discussions to the inclusion of women was a foreshadowing of the trouble to come for female Mounties.

During the final meeting prior to the Canada-wide vote, the commissioner urged the men in attendance to decide whether to open the ranks to women, commenting that “either we do it, or we don’t do it.” The commissioner used the argument that there was pressure from the “newspapers” and that “other police forces had women in the force already and they were doing well,” to convince resistant officers. Nadon assured those

¹⁰⁸ Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

present at the meeting that if “it doesn’t work, we’ll just fold it up,”¹⁰⁹ a comment that left open the possibility that the engagement of women as Mounties on an equal basis with men was initially viewed by RCMP leadership as experimental. In fact, the day of the announcement, the commissioner told a journalist with the Canadian Press (CP) that “married men will be eligible for regular duty and women for most regular duty.”¹¹⁰ His use of the word “most” may have been a slip of the tongue, but it suggests that the tenuous nature of the decision still resonated in the commissioner’s mind. Ultimately, the commissioner, his deputies, and the division representatives made the decision to employ women in the RCMP.¹¹¹ According to LeBlanc, it “wasn’t a one-man decision” but one that occurred within broader discussions taking place during the labour unrest in the spring of 1974.¹¹²

Why did the RCMP take so long to hire women? The issue was a highly complex one that cannot simply be attributed to a slow-moving government bureaucracy. Although police agencies in Europe and North America were employing women as constables, the RCMP continued to drag its feet on the issue. As we have seen, there were several internal and external factors that influenced the police force’s commanders to at least entertain the idea. When Insp. G.R. Crosse stated in an interview with the *Leader-Post* (Regina) that “there are a variety of reasons why women are being allowed in the force,” including increased pressure from women’s groups, his use of the word “allowed” clearly implied that the commanding officers remained in control of the RCMP,

¹⁰⁹ Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

¹¹⁰ “Ms to Join the Crimebusters,” *The Province* (Vancouver), 25 May 1974. Discussions regarding the hiring of married men were taking place as early as January 1973. At the time, members of the RCMP were required to be single for two years following basic training. The RCMP felt it was “limiting itself more or less to men of 21 or under, simply because men are marrying younger today.” In an effort to recruit older and more stable men, married men were being considered. “Mounties May Recruit Married Men,” *The Globe and Mail*, 13 January 1973.

¹¹¹ In an internal RCMP study on female police officers completed in 1986, author S/Sgt. Fred Stark does not acknowledge that internal pressures were a contributing factor in the final decision to hire women. Instead, he points to the ongoing studies and the survey taking place at the time as the impetus behind the decision. He concludes that in the “absence of any empirical evidence to the contrary, the assumption had to be that females would be capable of performing all the diversified duties in the Force equal to males.” Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 1.

¹¹² Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

despite the recurring pressure.¹¹³ The desire to maintain tight control might explain why it was four years after the RCSW's recommendations before commanding officers arrived at their decision. Publicly, the RCMP continued to insist that "the initiation of women into the force is no bow to the age we live in and no fulfillment of any stereotype. . . . It is simply an evolutionary process, one that was to be expected and one that will in all likelihood be carried off without a hitch."¹¹⁴ It is difficult to imagine the force as an evolutionary entity above political influence, given the RCMP's illegal activities following the October Crisis and its delay in hiring women. Nevertheless, the RCMP remained intent on reassuring Canadians that it was capable of incorporating women when, and if, it chose to do so.

Behind the scenes, some commanding officers and NCOs refused to bow to media or government pressure. Such intransigence signaled their belief in the independence of the police as essential for maintaining the support and trust of the civilian population. The RCMP's image also remained an important consideration to those men who remained steeped in a century of paramilitary tradition. The attitude was predicated on the prestige and recognition that membership in the RCMP had garnered them in the past. As well, the idea that Mounties were considered superior to other men left little room for the admittance of women and members of minority groups, an inclusion that was perceived as watering down their superiority and manliness. At the same time, however, debate over the hiring of women during the DSRR discussions revealed that some commanding officers were cognizant of changing public opinion. Shifting attitudes in the rank-and-file were also a concern. Resistance from the lower ranks in the field, in the form of the public airing of grievances and talk of unionization, was unprecedented to an older generation of Mountie who still believed in the unquestioned obedience of the lower ranks. Such demands not only took commanding officers by surprise, but called into question their authority and power.

¹¹³ Ruth Warick, "Women Join Ranks," *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 September 1974. Warick does not directly quote Crosse's comments, but the use of the term "allowed" in more than one place in the article suggests that it was a term he used.

¹¹⁴ Primeau, "They Always Get Their Person."

The Formation of Troop 17 (1974/75)

No matter how the RCMP chose to portray their decision, a renegotiation of bodies of authority was underway. After the final decision was made, the hiring of women and married men for the first time in the RCMP's history gave the appearance that the police force was intent on modernizing. Indeed, the commissioner characterized this period as a time of renewal. Nadon commented that the "force is now embarked on a program of change unprecedented in our history. It is a program that I endorse, support and will press."¹¹⁵ True to his word, on 24 May 1974, Nadon announced to the media that the RCMP would begin hiring women as regular members of the police force for the first time. In a press release a few months later, the RCMP informed Canadians that 292 women from across the country had applied to the RCMP and that thirty-two had been selected. The thirty-two represented every province in Canada except Prince Edward Island.¹¹⁶ They were scheduled to be sworn in simultaneously on 16 September 74 before being posted to Depot in Regina to begin their twenty-two weeks of training.¹¹⁷ Troop 17, the first troop of female RCMP officers, was being organized.

The media had played an important role in relaying the news about the RCMP's decision to hire Canadian women.¹¹⁸ One member of Troop 17 remembered that, after hearing the announcement on the radio, she "went down to the RCMP, made some enquiries, came home, filled out the form, and threw it in the mail."¹¹⁹ Several women had brothers, uncles, and fathers in the RCMP, a factor that had a bearing on their decision to apply. Bev Hoskar, along with her father and brother, were the first "sister, brother and father team in the RCMP." Indeed, five of the first female Mounties had

¹¹⁵ "Nadon Speech, 1984." One senior officer interviewed for this study commented that Nadon was the first commissioner who chose not to ignore demands for women's right to join the RCMP. He was not surprised that Nadon changed the regulations and he characterized the commissioner as a "great guy," unpretentious, and very receptive to the idea of hiring women. He also thought that Nadon's wife "probably" influenced him regarding the issue. Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

¹¹⁶ The woman selected from Prince Edward Island was not old enough to be hired in September 1974. She was sworn-in after her nineteenth birthday and joined the second all-female troop in March 1975. Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹¹⁷ Royal Canadian Mounted Police, press release, Ottawa, Ontario, 12 September 1974.

¹¹⁸ For example, see "RCMP to Accept Women," *The Vancouver Sun*, 24 May 1974.

¹¹⁹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

fathers who were police officers.¹²⁰ Trish O'Brien had a well-respected older brother in the RCMP, and his example influenced her. Initially, she had read an article in the local newspaper that reported the RCMP was considering hiring women as regular members. When she heard the radio announcement, she "called down to the local detachment that night" but they didn't have any information and asked her to call back on Monday, which she did.¹²¹ Janet Porter had two older brothers who were also in the police force. They were at odds over her decision to apply. One brother was very protective of her and thought that the work was too dangerous "and that she wouldn't fit in with the environment." The other brother thought that she should "get in at the beginning" and give it a try.¹²²

Apart from influential family members, many of the first female Mounties were looking for a challenge, job security, financial independence, better pay with benefits, and a career. Tina Kivisoo, according to one media report, "exchanged the glamorous life of a model for handcuffs and a revolver." Kivisoo was not interested in working at a "nine-to-five job."¹²³ Others, like Carol Franklin, were discouraged by the lack of advancement opportunities and low wages in the pink-collar occupations they were working in. Franklin recalled her frustration working as a bank teller as a deciding factor in her decision to apply to the RCMP:

In those years at the bank, it was very much a male-dominated organization, and I wanted to move up in the banking industry and of course, I couldn't. It was men only. I recall very distinctly, it probably would have been in the fall of 1973 when they brought in men who were management trainees who'd never worked in the bank before. And I thought, enough is enough here. . . . I was living on my own . . . [and] we didn't get paid very well. I need to do something that is gonna get me out of here.¹²⁴

Franklin was not alone in her frustration. The idea of the male as breadwinner continued to dominate most Canadian industries in the 1970s, and many of the letters received by

¹²⁰ "But No Nelson Eddy," *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 March 1975.

¹²¹ Trish O'Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

¹²² Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

¹²³ "First Women Constables Recruited for RCMP," *Canadian Press*, 16 September 1974.

¹²⁴ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

the RCSW expressed anger at poor wages for women and employers' insistence on promoting men over women for management positions.¹²⁵

While better pay and job security motivated some of the first female recruits, others were altruistically motivated. Several of this study's narrators stated that they wanted to give back to Canadian society and to make a difference in people's lives. Allison Palmer, for example, wanted "to be doing something where I felt I could make a difference in the community."¹²⁶ Some women had more practical reasons. Marianne Robson, who had taken criminology and social work courses as part of her bachelor of arts degree, was already on a waiting list for a large urban police force at the time of the RCMP's announcement. This particular police force, however, had established a quota of just eight women officers at any one time. Since all of the female positions were filled, Robson grew tired of waiting for a woman to resign or get pregnant. She applied to the RCMP as soon as her father, who heard the news on the radio, told her they were accepting applications from women. Robson summarized the occupations and marital status of the women:

There were girls who had worked for the force, either as secretaries, mostly secretaries, there was a couple of nurses, a couple of teachers, um . . . three teachers, myself with a BA, one girl with a master's in archeology, and the rest had grade twelve. . . . Everybody was single, but we had one girl . . . that was married, had been married but divorced, and one single mom.¹²⁷

Many of the women who were hired had post-secondary education or were working in a profession. They were also older than most of the male recruits who were being hired at the time.

None of the women from Troop 17 who were interviewed for this study saw themselves as "women's liberationists," breaking through gendered employment barriers in Canadian society. It is probable that the RCMP questioned the first female applicants during their employment interviews about any prior political involvement or activist activities. Given the RCMP's surveillance of the women's rights movement during this

¹²⁵ Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 258-60.

¹²⁶ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

¹²⁷ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

period, we can speculate that an effort was made to hire women who were not avowed feminists but who held politically conservative values more in keeping with the conventional understandings of gender that many male RCMP officers held. Indeed, one female narrator commented that they “weren’t there to prove that women could do the job; we were there because we wanted to be there.”¹²⁸ Another recalled,

I think the most positive thing [about our time at Depot] was, of course, being surrounded by women who were interested in the same thing. We started out with thirty-two and we made some very close friendships. . . . So that experience, going through the same thing, wanting the same things. None of us really knowing what in the hell we were getting into. Really, in the big scheme of things, when I think back I think, “Oh, my God, how naïve of me!” You know, you’re going to go into a men’s organization, and you’re going to be successful, and you’re gonna survive, and the world will be good, and treatment will be equal. . . . I never even thought of those things. I mean, I was twenty-two years old.¹²⁹

Youthful naiveté, and not the movement for women’s rights, played a more important role in the decision of many of the first women who applied to the RCMP.

On 16 September 1974, all thirty-two women were sworn in simultaneously across Canada through coordinated times arranged by the commissioner’s office.¹³⁰ A Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) communication from the commissioner transmitted to every division seventeen days earlier revealed the RCMP’s plan to tightly coordinate the swearing-in ceremonies. It also instructed that the female applicants were to arrive at Depot on the 18th or 19th of September.¹³¹ The commissioner’s orders for a simultaneous swearing-in and arrival at the academy suggest that the RCMP was cognizant of the public relations value of the occasion. The commanding officer at Depot, C/Supt. Henry P. Tadeson, also sensed the importance of the engagement of the first women and closely monitored the swearing-in ceremonies across the country. Tadeson received CPIC messages from each division, advising him of the dates of

¹²⁸ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008. Also Maj. D.E. Toole, “A View From the Sidelines,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, 37:7-8 (1975): 8.

¹²⁹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹³⁰ Royal Canadian Mounted Police press release, Ottawa, 11 September 1974.

¹³¹ The Commissioner, RCMP Canadian Police Information Centre (CPIC) communication, 30 August 1974, RCMP file DPT-575 (17-74/75). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08. CPIC was a networked computer database operated by the National Police Service that linked all justice and law enforcement agencies across Canada.

arrival and modes of transportation of the new recruits to Regina following their engagement. “D” Division (Winnipeg, Manitoba) was the first to report that they had engaged three women as constables at \$10,794.00 per annum. The words “First One” were written on the hard copy of this message and sent to Tadeson, who noted on the bottom “Copy to museum for posterity purposes.”¹³²

The simultaneous engagement of an entire troop across six time zones was a historical precedent that has never been duplicated. The RCMP emphasized that their intention was to transfer the pressure of being the “first” onto a group of women rather than an individual.¹³³ Linda Rutherford, a member of Troop 17, thought that it was a good idea: simultaneous engagements meant that no individual woman was more important than the other women in the troop, a factor that contributed to troop unity when they were under pressure.¹³⁴ As a further discouragement to anyone claiming to be the first, all of the women were issued regimental numbers randomly within a limited sequence. Although these numbers still identified their length of service within the force, the random assignment of regimental numbers was a significant departure from the RCMP practice of issuing them sequentially.¹³⁵ As a paramilitary institution, hierarchy and rank contributed significantly to the culture of the RCMP, making regimental numbers extremely important. A lower regimental number signified longer service and greater seniority; police officers with seniority were generally considered for promotion before candidates with shorter service.¹³⁶ Regimental numbers were also important because they contextualized an individual Mountie’s service in relation to pivotal events within RCMP history.¹³⁷ For example, in the 1970s, a Mountie could determine if a fellow officer began his career pre- or post-equine training at the academy based on his

¹³² At the time, the RCMP’s museum was located on the property of the training academy. CPIC number SB2629, D Division, 16 September 1974. RCMP Heritage Collection Unit Archives, Regina, Saskatchewan.

¹³³ “Women RCMP Officers Inevitable: MacRae,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 November 1974.

¹³⁴ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

¹³⁵ Regimental numbers have been issued sequentially since 1875. Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 242-43; 272. Allison Palmer, email communication to author, 30 March 2010.

¹³⁶ Jane Hall, *The Red Wall: A Woman in the RCMP* (Renfrew, Ontario: General Store Publishing, 2007), 19.

¹³⁷ Thank you to Supt. Ric Hall for clarifying the finer points of the regimental numbering system for this study. Ric Hall, email communication to author, 5 September 2010.

regimental number.¹³⁸ Although it is true that one woman technically received the lowest regimental number of the thirty-two issued on 16 September, no one woman was able to claim with certainty her seniority over the other recruits who were sworn in that day.

While randomly issued numbers appeared to be a fair solution to the perceived problem of being the “first,” the transference of pressure onto a group rather than an individual was built on the assumption that the women might be incapable of handling public scrutiny. Confusingly, Supt. William MacRae, training officer at the academy at the time, observed in a media interview that “a good deal of pressure is currently on the shoulders of the first 32 recruits since they are clearing the pathway for others . . . but when they are posted in communities across the country, they will be in a completely individual situation.”¹³⁹ His remarks called into question the wisdom of the RCMP’s group approach if the women were likely to face public pressure as individual police officers once in the field. As we will see, the attention on the first female Mounties did not end when they completed their training but continued after they arrived at their first postings.

It is clear that the RCMP attempted to control several aspects of the engagement of the first women in an effort to appear egalitarian and ensure their successful integration while under media scrutiny. To that end, the RCMP insisted that the women were not receiving special treatment. Maj. Doris Toole, seconded from the Canadian military to assist the first women constables, stated in one interview that “what the RCMP was striving for in the program was that no special treatment be provided the women.”¹⁴⁰ While Toole’s assurances were likely in reference to the training program itself, the unsolicited special considerations surrounding the engagement of the first women were undeniable. Female police officers were seen to require special protection from public scrutiny during training, reinforcing assumptions of women as the weaker sex and emotional, rather than rational, beings. Further, this approach intimated that the women were unable to handle the rigorous demands of police work, an implication that

¹³⁸ Riding a horse had been part of recruit training since 1873. A significant amount of a recruit’s time was dedicated to equine training, which was viewed as a “character builder.” For RCMP traditionalists, the elimination of horses from the academy’s curriculum represented a “the erosion of the old ways.” Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits,” 48. Riding lessons and equine care were phased out of the recruit training program at the academy in 1966. Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 149-50.

¹³⁹ “Women RCMP Officers Inevitable: MacRae,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 November 1974.

¹⁴⁰ Marsha Erb, “No Special Treatment for Women,” *Saskatoon Star-Phoenix*, 8 November 1974.

proved highly detrimental to female police officers once they began work at their first postings. Women continued to be situated as different from their male counterparts in a number of subtle ways that reinforced systems of meaning about femininity. These power differentials continued to justify the exclusion of women from police culture for decades following their arrival in the RCMP.

Rather than shielding the women from attention, the special arrangements stimulated national interest in the members of Troop 17. The swearing-in ceremonies received local and national media attention. Louise Ferguson recalled the media being present when she was sworn in and her photograph's appearing on the front page of her home town's newspaper. The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) recorded the event live at the RCMP's Toronto headquarters.¹⁴¹ The presence of the media posed unexpected problems for some of the women. Carol Franklin did not realize that she was enlisting for five years until the swearing-in ceremony: "Nobody told us we were signing up for five years. I recall the shock, my God, five years, that's a long time. Nobody had pre-warned us . . . and you've got media there, and they're setting it up the swearing-in so that the media can capture it . . . and then signing on that dotted line and seeing that you're swearing for five years."¹⁴² Franklin was taken by surprise by this development, but she felt she could not question the RCMP officer in charge about this requirement in front of the media. Rather than protecting Franklin, the RCMP's sanctioning of a media presence proved, in this case, to be detrimental.

The women of Troop 17 were re-enacting a ceremony that had been observed by their male predecessors for one hundred years. As philosopher Judith Butler argues, "Performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual" whereby the body is

¹⁴¹ *The World at Six*, "RCMP Welcomes First Female Officers," CBC Radio, 16 September 1974, http://archives.cbc.ca/society/crime_justice/topics.html [accessed 19 October 2010]. The Canadian Press published a wire photo of three women being sworn in at RCMP headquarters in Toronto. A/Commr. E.R. Lysyk, the commanding officer for "Q" Division, officiated at the ceremony. His presence was another departure from the swearing-in of male recruits, who did not usually merit the attention of such a high-ranking officer during their engagement. See *The Chronicle-Herald* (Halifax), 17 September 1974; also "RCMP," *The Daily Colonist* (Victoria), 17 September 1974.

¹⁴² Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010. At the time, the Canadian Armed Forces also engaged their recruits for a five-year period, another characteristic the RCMP shared with the military. Marc Lalonde, *Status of Women in Canada: 1975* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), 34.

naturalized and understood in cultural terms. For Butler, gender is “manufactured through a sustained set of acts, posited through the gendered stylization of the body.”¹⁴³ The repetitive act of the swearing-in ceremony for male police officers over the course of a century was a benchmark of police culture that reinforced masculinity, and the male police body, as the standard measurement for the RCMP. The women were not merely reproducing or mimicking a masculine swearing-in ritual, however, but were modifying its function as a singularly male rite. The physical presence of the female body repeating this ritual challenged the dominance of masculinity and the notion of the male police body as the only body capable of an oath of loyalty to the police force and the nation.

There was one other important consideration that established the first female Mounties as different. In seconding Maj. Doris Toole from the Canadian military to act as an advisor to Troop 17, the RCMP were acknowledging that they did not know how the new police body would respond to recruit training at the academy. Toole was an armed forces personnel officer with sixteen years of service, including work as the officer in charge of female recruit training at Canadian Forces Base (CFB) Cornwallis.¹⁴⁴ She had also served as the training officer and regimental commander during an exchange program with the United States navy, overseeing 600 women undergoing recruit training. Toole was advised early in July 1974 that she might receive a new posting but was not informed of its nature. She recalled being told at the end of that month to accompany the Director of Women Personnel to a luncheon at the RCMP’s officers’ mess in Ottawa, where they met with an assistant commissioner and two officers from the RCMP’s personnel branch. According to Toole, “I must have passed muster because the next thing I knew I was told I was being seconded to the RCMP for approximately ten months.”¹⁴⁵ Under the terms of her secondment, the RCMP reimbursed the Department of National Defense (DND) for Toole’s salary and the police force was responsible for her travel costs and payment for any “temporary duty” she performed. The RCMP also provided accommodation for her in the Officer’s Mess at the training academy.

¹⁴³ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 2006), xv.

¹⁴⁴ “Forces Woman to Aid RCMP Training,” *Halifax-Chronicle Herald*, 21 September 1974; “Saint John Woman to Assist RCMP,” *Evening Times-Globe* (St. John, New Brunswick), 26 September 1974.

¹⁴⁵ Doris Toole, email message to author, 6 July 2008.

Toole understood her role as purely advisory. She spent the month of August 1974 at RCMP headquarters in Ottawa reviewing their regulations to determine what changes needed to be made to accommodate women. For example, she discussed health issues with senior staff, particularly the need for a maternity leave policy that stipulated when a female officer should leave operational duties for reassignment during pregnancy.¹⁴⁶ Although she was not involved in the selection of the first thirty-two women and did not see their personnel files, she did discuss the RCMP's choices with senior staff and was given an overview of the backgrounds of the new recruits. Decisions regarding the women's uniform and kit had already been made by the time of her secondment. In September, Toole moved to Regina. Once at the academy, her primary task was to act as liaison between the women and the police force and to provide advice to the recruits regarding training issues, standards, and upkeep of the uniform and kit, advise the troop counsellor Cpl. Ken Wilkens of training problems, and monitor training classes.¹⁴⁷ She referred any queries from the media to RCMP staff. In preparation for the women's graduation and posting to the field, Toole made three visits to detachments in Saskatchewan, where she participated in regular patrols as well as one drug raid. She also "talked to RCMP members about women soon joining them on detachment and tried to address their concerns . . . as well as those of some of their spouses." She later debriefed the female recruits about these visits.¹⁴⁸

The recruits responded to the presence of Maj. Toole in a variety of ways. One woman remembered that, at the time, "a lot of the girls resented the fact that there was someone from the armed forces there, because some of them didn't think she should have been there because she wasn't RCMP and she didn't know what was expected."¹⁴⁹ While the recruits were relatively powerless to make changes in their training program, Toole could make suggestions to commanding officers and recommend changes. At times, according to one recruit, her input also had a negative effect on the women's

¹⁴⁶ Doris Toole, email message to author, 6 July 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Every troop at the academy in the 1970s had a troop counsellor assigned to it. The counselors were instructors at the academy who were selected by the Training Office. Counsellors listened to any concerns or problems that the recruits were experiencing and met with them a couple of evenings every week. Occasionally, a counselor invited the troop to his home for dinner. Some counsellors were more actively engaged with their troop than others.

¹⁴⁸ Doris Toole, email message to author, 8 July 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

training. Louise Ferguson recalled that Toole did not want the women to take physical education or self-defence classes with male recruits, an attitude that Ferguson thought was “a mistake at the time. . . . [Toole’s] perspective was a little different than the objective we were trying to achieve.” Ferguson also recalled that Toole’s military rank was a source of tension for some men at the academy, who would “walk around the block not to have to salute her” due to her higher rank.¹⁵⁰ Others, such as Linda Rutherford, had great respect for Toole. Rutherford, who felt more secure knowing that Toole was advocating for the troop, claims she put the major on a pedestal and was in awe of her military rank.¹⁵¹

There were also generational differences. Three of the women interviewed for this study recognized, in hindsight, that the younger recruits had more difficulty coming to terms with the presence of Maj. Toole than the older women in the troop. They considered Toole “old,” even though she was just thirty-eight years of age at the time. As one woman explained, “We were young” and some of the women failed to appreciate Toole’s “sacrifice.”¹⁵² Trish O’Brien remembered that some of the younger women “resented her being around; they thought she was checking up on us. I think she overplayed her role a bit too. She was supposed to be more of an advisor but she ended up being almost like a drill sergeant. We really didn’t understand her role totally.”¹⁵³ There were arguments over clothing, untidiness, being out late at night, or missing curfew.

From an overall perspective, however, the secondment of Maj. Toole is an important development in the history of the RCMP. While every male troop had a troop counselor, none had an additional advisor from an outside institution. The presence of Toole represents the first and only time the RCMP seconded an advisor from outside the police force to assist in the training of one of its troops, an indication of the unease with

¹⁵⁰ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006. Bill Jones, an instructor at the academy at the time, thought that it was Maj. Toole who insisted that male police officers salute her when passing by. Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

¹⁵¹ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010. In 1969, the Canadian Armed Forces had just twenty-nine females with the rank of major out of a total of 3,000 personnel with that rank, making Toole a trailblazer in breaking down gender barriers in her own right. *Report of the RCSW*, 137.

¹⁵² Trish O’Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

¹⁵³ Trish O’Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

which the force approached the training of female recruits. The major's rank as an armed forces officer cast doubt on the idea that only men were capable of achieving the rank of officer. Further, Toole's secondment was an admission that manly Mounties needed the assistance of a woman in training the female police body. As one commanding officer at the academy at the time explained, they were unsure of how the women would respond to the tough physical training and regimented lifestyle required of recruits, an indication that the myth of the frailty of the female body was still very much a part of the socialization of young women. Commanders were very wary of the potential problems that training young women might present. For the most part, they were relieved that Toole was there.¹⁵⁴

The Arrival of Troop 17 at Depot

The special considerations that were arranged for the swearing-in of the first female Mounties undoubtedly reinforced understandings of women's bodies as profoundly different from men's. The arrival of the female recruits at the training academy challenged these understandings and worked to dismantle the power barriers used to justify women's exclusion. To appreciate the importance of the physical body to the history and practices of the RCMP, it is necessary to understand the origins of the place where new recruits and their bodies were disciplined and trained in preparation for police work. The idea for a police training academy dates back to 1869, when Prime Minister John A. Macdonald envisioned a police force with the "military bearing of the Irish Constabulary," mounted, equipped with rifles, and instructed in the use of artillery.¹⁵⁵ Macdonald's mounted cavalry was inspired by the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), the empire's largest and most professional police force at the time. Organized to control civil strife and social unrest in Ireland using men from the local population,¹⁵⁶ the

¹⁵⁴ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

¹⁵⁵ S.W. Horrall, "Sir John A. Macdonald and the Mounted Police Force for the Northwest Territories," *Canadian Historical Review* 53:2 (June 1972): 181.

¹⁵⁶ For more on the issues of sectarianism, partisanship, and the RIC in Ireland and Northern Ireland see Marquis, "Policing Two Imperial Frontiers."

RIC served as a model for many of the empire's colonial forces.¹⁵⁷ In 1880, Macdonald dispatched Commr. A.G. Irvine to Dublin, Ireland, to study the RIC's "Depot of Instruction." Irvine was impressed with the idea of a permanent training facility where all recruits would be posted for a six-month period for training in courses taught by officers from the British military.¹⁵⁸

Despite Irvine's enthusiasm, the Canadian government did not immediately act on his recommendations to establish a centre modeled after the RIC's Depot. It was not until the Riel resistance of 1885 that the federal government was convinced that it was time to expand its policing operations on the prairies, necessitating the development of a formal training centre for its growing police force. The NWMP academy, also referred to as "Depot" following the RIC model, was established in Regina later that year.¹⁵⁹ It was a permanent centre with a riding facility, stables, and forty prefabricated buildings organized around a parade square that is still in use today. Sixty horses and one hundred men could be quartered on the site, where foot drill, mounted infantry drill, veterinary science, revolver training, harnessing, shoeing and saddling horses, musketry, police regulations, and the country's laws were taught.¹⁶⁰ Full-time staff members were appointed from the Royal Military College at Kingston, Ontario, or were men who had served with the British military in colonial postings such as India.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁷ Historian R.C. Macleod maintained that although the NWMP resembled other forces within the empire, it "developed in response to local conditions almost entirely without reference to outside models," giving it an "indigenous character" that was not immediately noticed by Canadians or the Canadian government. See R.C. Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement, 1873-1905* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), 162.

¹⁵⁸ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 13.

¹⁵⁹ The name Depot may also refer to the fact that in the 1880s, the NWMP initially established an "outpost and supply station along the banks of Wascana Creek" at the current site. See James McKenzie, *Troop 17: The Making of Mounties* (Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1992), 9.

¹⁶⁰ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 12; Marquis, "Policing Two Imperial Frontiers," 191.

¹⁶¹ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 14. The nationality of the officer corps and NCOs of the police force in its early days has been the subject of debate. R.C. Macleod argued that the "myth of the English officer was not due to a disproportionate number of non-Canadians in senior positions," as some historians have suggested. According to Macleod, most officers spent a number of years in Canada before taking up their commissions and that in the first three decades of the force's existence, only "one or two" came directly from England. Macleod, *The NWMP and Law Enforcement*, 74-77. Greg Marquis has shown that instructors at Depot were British non-commissioned officers from the royal marines and cavalry. Marquis, "Policing Two Imperial Frontiers," 190-91.

Depot's paramilitary approach to training and its hierarchical organizational structure had important implications for the first female recruits in 1974. Women were entering a training facility that was sustained by a gendered hierarchy meant to instill discipline and loyalty in new recruits. For example, on first arrival at the academy, all recruits were supplied with brown fatigues and runners and told that they had to run double-time together between all classes with their heads bowed "because they lacked the knowledge to pay proper 'compliments' to their superiors."¹⁶² Individual identities were subsumed during the training period and a new police identity, one that was dominantly masculine, emerged. The reconfiguring of individual identities from civilian to police officer relied on a set of gendered values and norms that shaped the training experiences of recruits. Gendered identities were managed with a view to building a cohesive and disciplined collective body of masculine police officers who would reflexively respond to the orders of commanding officers in the field.

Esprit de corps and troop unity were also important components of recruit training and were cultivated through a variety of ways. Robert Teather described the philosophy behind the RCMP's tough training methods in his autobiographical account of his training at Depot in 1967:

"You have arrived here today as a troop of individuals, but you will leave this academy as an individual troop or not at all!" The words shouted at us by our Corps Sergeant Major, and repeated often by our Drill Corporal, still ring clearly in my ears after serving with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for twenty-nine years. Those were the first words we heard as new recruits to the RCMP. Those were the words that ensured our survival through six months of basic recruit training. We learned that by combining our strengths and adopting a common goal, we could acquire a degree of strength and courage as a team that we did not have as individuals.¹⁶³

Indeed, the welfare and survival of a troop during their training period was perceived to be dependent on notions of group conformity. Those who refused to pull their weight were held to account by their troop mates, who resorted to hazing rituals to ensure compliance. Bill Jones, who went through recruit training in the 1960s prior to the

¹⁶² Leighton, "Red Serge and High Spirits," 42.

¹⁶³ Robert Gordon Teather, *Mountie Makers: Putting the Canadian in RCMP*, 2nd ed. (Surrey, B.C.: Heritage House Publishing, 2004), 4.

elimination of equine training, was the recipient of a hazing on one occasion when he arrived late to help his troop clean their dormitory:

If you weren't there or perceived to be not pulling your end, they'd fill a tub full of cold water and take you over there and fire you into it and hold you under for about thirty seconds. Um, I was off doing something else, completely forgot, and of course as soon as I walked into the dorm, there was no discussion, no nothing, just eight guys picked you up and threw you into a tub full of cold water. When I was there, uh, you heard stories of guys being "horse troughed," where they'd fill a horse trough full of horse poop and horse urine and throw a guy in it. There was one guy basically roughed up behind the stables, uh, for not contributing to the health of the troop. You know, there were a lot of those kinds of things.¹⁶⁴

Hazing rituals in homosocial institutions were fueled by aggression and competition, important mechanisms for male bonding and male friendships.¹⁶⁵ Jones also recalled that instructors were complicit in using exclusionary practices to single out recruits who were not of Anglo-Canadian descent. There were six Catholic French Canadian men in his troop:

[They] were treated abysmally. . . . They were constantly picked on, teased, um, the environment at that time was primarily English-speaking white male. Even if you were just different enough to be French and not particularly fluent in English, uh, they were treated quite poorly by troop mates, by corporals; the drill instructors would take great delight in picking on some French guy who couldn't pronounce a word or something like that.¹⁶⁶

Little had changed by the time the women of Troop 17 began their training. When asked about the presence of minorities in training at Depot in 1974, Marianne Robson recalled, "Well there was nobody of colour at Depot . . . It was all white male, mostly Anglo-Saxon. I don't even think there was not that many French. I can't even remember if there were any French. . . . And thirty-two women. If you look at traditionally policing in Canada,

¹⁶⁴ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011. Horse troughing, once considered an acceptable practice, has since been banned. "It was one method that a squad had of punishing one off its members who was not giving one hundred percent to the squad's training activities." Supt. J. Religa quoted in Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 351.

¹⁶⁵ Kathy Peiss quoted in Mike O'Brien, "Manhood and the Militia Myth: Masculinity, Class and Militarism in Ontario, 1902-1914," *Labour/Le Travail* 42 (Fall 1998): 133.

¹⁶⁶ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

minorities are few and far between.”¹⁶⁷ Robson’s recollection of the absence of racial and ethnic minorities at Depot confirms that the image of the RCMP was reliant on ideological discourses that positioned white men of Anglo-Canadian descent as solely representative of state and civic authority.

By the 1970s, recruit training was strenuous and discipline was strict, much as it had been for one hundred years. It served a dual purpose: to prepare the new police officer for work in the RCMP and to afford the RCMP the opportunity to assess the new recruit.¹⁶⁸ Journalist Tony Leighton, in a feature article on the RCMP academy for *Equinox* magazine, summarized training at Depot as “one of the most demanding police-training programmes in the world, a grueling hybrid of military boot camp and modern police college.” Leighton observed that it was considered a “rite of passage, a paying of dues, an initiation into a very exclusive club,” where an esprit de corps that comes from “membership in an organization steeped in tradition and legend” was cultivated.¹⁶⁹

Training staff were known to lean on new arrivals, “overdosing” them with discipline and attention to detail, particularly in the drill hall.¹⁷⁰ Foot drill occupied approximately fifty hours of a recruit’s six months of training. It was a conditioning process meant to transform a troop of thirty-two individual bodies into a smoothly moving unit that could “change direction without losing a beat” the instant a command was given.¹⁷¹ Drill also served as a form of mental training designed to reprogram civilians into police officers, to teach them to take action while under stress and to make quick decisions during violent situations. It also taught new recruits how to manage their feelings and emotions, one of the purposes of the yelling that drill instructors regularly engaged in. Yelling was a tool used by instructors to instill the aggression and mental toughness in a recruit that were seen to be vital in the performance of police duties in the field.¹⁷² The management of emotions was one mechanism used to reinforce masculinity

¹⁶⁷ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹⁶⁸ “A Guide to Success: Basic Recruit Training,” RCMP recruiting guide, 1975.

¹⁶⁹ Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits,” 40.

¹⁷⁰ Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits,” 42.

¹⁷¹ Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits,” 42; 46.

¹⁷² Susan Ehrlich Martin, “Police Force or Police Service? Gender and Emotional Labor,” *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 561 (January 1999): 121.

as the normative standard for fighting crime.¹⁷³ Military drill also trained Mounties to suppress automatic human responses to fear and danger, which, as the last chapter will show, came at a price for many police officers.

By the end of training, a troop could perform a twenty-minute drill routine that included all of the basic marching movements¹⁷⁴ that had been part of European military training for some two centuries. Police forces across the country recognized the emotional impact that large numbers of male police bodies marching in unison down city streets created in the minds of the general public. It was used as a method of crowd control during riots and strikes. The beating of shields with batons in unison was an intimidation tactic to reinforce the idea that untrained individuals faced an organized phalanx. Marching was also a tradition and a ritualistic performance used by police to convey group solidarity and discipline to remind Canadians that police officers were willing to place their lives in jeopardy for the sake of their communities. It set police officers apart from ordinary citizens and was meant to encourage respect for state authority.

Marching was also a highly visual display of masculine authority that precluded the participation of female police officers, and police departments were determined to keep it that way despite the entrance of women into the rank-and-file. The Toronto Police Service provides one example. Toronto's police department regularly organized a troop of fifty police officers from each division to march annually in the city's Police March Past. None of the troops permitted female officers to march with male officers because "they were too short, their legs were not long enough, and their hats were different from the [men's]. They subsequently ended up marching behind the men, but in front of the horses."¹⁷⁵ A muscular physique and imposing physical presence were clearly valued by the Toronto police department during public displays. Denying female officers an equal place during the march demonstrated to the public that the female body did not command the authority or power that the superior male body represented. Consequently, the women occupied a subordinate space at the rear of the parade. The

¹⁷³ Martin, "Police Force or Police Service?," 121.

¹⁷⁴ McKenzie, *Troop 17*, 31.

¹⁷⁵ Marilyn Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice: Examining the Possibilities* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 40.

practice of segregated troops during the annual march did not end until 1991, when Toronto's male and female police officers marched side by side for the first time.

In addition to drill, running, self-defence tactics, and swimming were part of the RCMP's physical training curriculum in the 1970s.¹⁷⁶ As a benchmark of physical fitness, recruits were required to run the Cooper's Test, which measured cardiovascular fitness based on running a mile and a half in twelve minutes.¹⁷⁷ It was one of many benchmarks of physical performance expected of all recruits. The RCMP promoted physical fitness and sporting activities as a site where the physically fit male police body, the nation, and the image of the police force were interconnected. For example, on 17 May 1958, the CBC aired a thirty minute television special titled "Scarlet Guardians." The program showcased RCMP recruits undergoing training to illustrate how the "average Mountie was made." The program's narrator colourfully described the police officers as big, rugged men: "giants" who were trained in "modern methods of committing mayhem on the human carcass."¹⁷⁸ The voice-over accompanied depictions of recruits firing revolvers, boxing, practicing jujitsu, jogging, and performing calisthenics. This emphasis on the hypermasculinity of Mounties was a Cold War public relations exercise meant to reassure Canadians that the members of their federal police force would be able to meet the physical demands necessary to defend the nation from a foreign attack.

Physical training affirmed group loyalty and male bonding, which normalized the homosocial nature of the RCMP. The pressure to meet these standards was intense in

¹⁷⁶ Recruits and instructors could participate in several extracurricular activities to challenge themselves physically. They included running in the 200 Mile Club, the 500 Mile Club, the 1,000 Mile Club, the English Channel Swim (1,290 lengths of the pool at Depot), the Diefenbaker Swim (100 miles, the length of Diefenbaker Lake), and Bench Press (150 percent body weight for males, 100 percent for females). Record holders in these activities were posted on display boards in the gymnasium hallway. Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 299-301.

¹⁷⁷ The test was developed by Dr. Kenneth Cooper, author of the bestselling book *Aerobics* first published in 1968. Cooper's test was part of a conditioning program for astronauts, the military, and law enforcement agencies. "Dr. Kenneth Cooper," Cooper 40 Aerobics, <http://www.cooperaerobics.com.htm> [accessed 9 November 2010]. In addition to completing the Cooper's Test, recruits were required to complete The Physical Abilities Requirement Evaluation (PARE), which simulated common physical demands of police work such as chasing a suspect up a staircase. Participants had four minutes to complete two obstacle courses. Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 299; 301.

¹⁷⁸ "The Scarlet Guardians," *Here and There*, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 17 May 1958, http://archives.cbc.ca/society/crime_justice/clips/16877/ [accessed 2 May 2010].

Depot in the 1970s, and not all recruits, male or female, met the requirements. Indeed, physical exercise was governed by a strategy known as “making the troop pay” with extra physical activities when a weaker member lagged behind. Instructors believed that the weakest link would “shape up, so that the rest of the troop wouldn’t have to keep ‘paying’ for his or her inadequacies.”¹⁷⁹ Occasionally, intense peer pressure resulted in ostracism. If a recruit was continually dragging the entire troop down, troop mates would “pack a recruit’s bags and set them out in the middle of the parade square” as an indication that they had decided it was time for him or her to leave the academy.¹⁸⁰ Dave Moore recalled that his troop was encouraged by instructors to give the “weak people in the squad” a bad time to pressure them to improve their performance.¹⁸¹ Most troops, whether male or female, had one or two members who resigned while at Depot. Resignations were one indicator of the importance placed on rigorous exercise as the only way to achieve the strong and physically fit body necessary for the effective performance of police duties.

It is little wonder, then, that meetings on how to house and train the female body at Depot occupied a considerable amount of time for the commanding officers charged with preparing for the arrival of women. With just four months to prepare, there was a concerted effort to ensure that all thirty-two women successfully completed their training. The first female Mounties were a “big deal” at the academy and it was important to the RCMP that they be successful since “the eyes of Canada were on this little crew of thirty-two.”¹⁸² According to one instructor at the time, because Depot was not prepared for women and since no one knew how the women would react to the type of training, the RCMP’s commanding officers worked hard to ensure the women succeeded while in the public spotlight.¹⁸³

Conventional notions about women as the weaker sex framed the senior officers’ discussions. As one commanding officer admitted years later, the officers at Depot had an image of women that started “with their mothers,” and that men tended to transfer

¹⁷⁹ McKenzie, *Troop 17*, 37.

¹⁸⁰ McKenzie, *Troop 17*, 40.

¹⁸¹ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

¹⁸² Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

¹⁸³ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

that standard onto women in general.¹⁸⁴ For some, the female police body was in need of containment but also, ironically, in need of protection from male recruits. Initially, there was a suggestion that a fence be erected around “C” Block, the barracks where the women would be housed. Commanding officers preparing for the arrival of the women wondered how healthy young male recruits would react to their presence at the academy. Although it was never under serious consideration, the idea of a fence reveals the RCMP’s unease over the potential for sexual activity between male and female recruits.¹⁸⁵ Iris Marion Young argues that “woman lives her body as *object* as well as subject” and in a patriarchal, sexist society, women are frequently viewed as the “potential object of another subject’s intentions and manipulations rather than as a living manifestation of action and intention.”¹⁸⁶ While the bodies of male recruits were also controlled by commanding officers, women were regulated differently as passive and sexual objects without agency. Such assumptions relegated female Mounties to a subordinate status and positioned them as less than equal as police officers from the outset.

It was not always healthy young male recruits that women recruits needed protection from in the eyes of senior officers and instructors. Several people interviewed for this study recalled concerns about extramarital affairs taking place between female recruits and some of the married instructional staff at the academy. “We had raging paranoia that a male instructor was going to get involved in an inappropriate relationship with a female recruit, which to my knowledge happened on numerous occasions,” according to one instructor. “We had one occasion where one particular corporal was having a relationship with a female recruit. They were both hauled up into Service Court; he got fined \$25.00 and she got fined \$50.00.”¹⁸⁷ Unfortunately, this narrator could not recall why a heavier fine was assessed the female member, although it is tempting to speculate that she had been positioned as seductress by the service court.

¹⁸⁴ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

¹⁸⁵ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007. Indeed, by December, there was “at least one serious romance between a male and female recruit.” Martin O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In,” *The Woman’s Globe and Mail*, 5 December 1974.

¹⁸⁶ Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ and Other Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 44.

¹⁸⁷ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

Bill Jones provided insight into the lengths to which some corporals went in their efforts to be sexually appealing to female recruits:

We had a drill instructor who was notorious for constantly showing up when the women were getting swimming training, which had nothing to do with the fact that the first Speedos issued to the women went transparent after about three months in chlorinated water! He was notorious. . . . He used to wear a girdle when he taught the women's troops. We used to see him. He'd lace this thing up so his waist would look all [slim], because he had a bit of a paunch. Only wore it when he taught the women. One of the guys I worked with in self-defense, before he taught a women's class, would spend a half an hour in the weight room pumping weights so that his arms would look bigger. . . . Men behave stupidly around women and that was a new thing for the Mounted Police. They'd never had to deal with it.¹⁸⁸

The response of these instructors to the physical shape and condition of their bodies represents a reversal to more conventionally held assumption that women were the only sex preoccupied with the appearance of their bodies. Their actions were rooted in earlier ideas about the pre-eminence of the male police physique. The Victorians' fascination with ideal body sizes and shapes "contributed to the consolidation of notions of male power and female softness [that] enhanced patriarchal dominance" in Victorian society.¹⁸⁹ The persistence of these concepts half a century later was evident in the CBC's 1958 production of the "Scarlet Guardians," in which the male Mountie body was depicted as the ideal physique for Canadian men. In 1974, physical power and dominance in the form of a strong and tall male body that was irresistible to women was still perceived by some instructors as a valuable tool for conveying male heterosexuality.

One other person took advantage of the presence of women at Depot to examine the female police body more closely:

When the women would come up and go to swimming training, they had, their change rooms were on the main floor of the pool area. And somebody had gone into the swimming instructors' office, locked the doors, and then dug a hole in the wall or in the actual doorway so they

¹⁸⁸ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011; also Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Colin Howell, "A Manly Sport: Baseball and the Social Construction of Masculinity," *Gender and History in Canada*, eds. Joy Parr and Mark Rosenfeld (Mississauga, On.: Copp Clark, 1996), 189.

could peek through at the women changing. It was just my good luck that I went to go into the swimming office to get something from one of the staff and found the doors locked and thought, “Boy, that’s really odd” because the doors were never locked during the daytime. So I reported that to my staff sergeant . . . [and] we went back afterwards and found this hole in the wall. So that prompted a big investigation. . . . It was obvious someone had done that.¹⁹⁰

The investigation concluded that a male member of Depot’s support staff had created the hole in the wall. The gaze of the male staff member objectified the women and reinforced their ongoing subordination as the other within the context of a male-dominated institution.¹⁹¹

These oral histories depart significantly from discourses of heroic Mounties found in a variety of popular genres. There, Mounties were constituted as sexually “safe” men and were more often than not depicted in the company of their horses rather than women. Portrayals of white, unmarried men bonded together through military discipline and male camaraderie was disrupted by the arrival of women, however. The male response to the female police body as an object of sexual desire was closer to reality than the romanticized discourses that shaped the RCMP’s popular image.

Training the Female Police Body

From the perspective of the female recruits, it was obvious that academy personnel did not know what to expect. Instructors speculated about who would be training Troop 17 until commanding officers decided that the senior NCO from each discipline, rather than the corporals, would be their instructors.¹⁹² Some instructors thought that many aspects of the training program, such as swimming and use of firearms, could be delivered in exactly the same way to women and men. Self-defense was the exception; instructors within the unit were concerned that women might receive too many injuries and doubted that the women would even accept the idea that self-defense training was important. Instructional staff were not informed of the exact date

¹⁹⁰ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

¹⁹¹ For more on the relationship between the display of women for the erotic pleasure of heterosexual men, and the role it plays in women’s subordination, see Laura Mulvey, “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Screen* 16:3 (1975): 6-18.

¹⁹² Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

women were expected until a couple of weeks beforehand. Bill Jones remembered a hastily-called staff meeting in which instructors debated whether the program should be delivered to the female recruits as it was designed or whether it should be modified. Depot's self-defense program was "quite violent" in the 1970s, according to Jones. There was a great deal of choking into submission, hair pulling, gouging of eyes, tearing of noses and ears, and twisting of flesh during practice sessions in class. Jones recalled:

We basically went on the premise that you hurt the other person until they gave up. That was the way it was taught. You applied pain, and when the pain was too much for the other person, they'd quit. That was the only restriction. . . . We had two distinct schools of thought in the self-defense unit. We had what I call the old school, who thought women were frail and would be easily damaged and we should not treat them the same, and then we had the younger group, which . . . were recruited in the mid-60s, and our opinion was, let's just put it forward the way it is and see how they cope with it. . . . [I]f it doesn't seem to be working, then we'll look at maybe the techniques need some work. But let's assume that the women can do what the men can do until proven otherwise.¹⁹³

Generational differences clearly played an important role in how the first female Mounties were trained. The disconnect between the two groups of instructors mirrored shifts in attitudes about Canadian women taking place in society, a shift that some senior officers found difficult to accommodate or accept.

Physical training instructors initially set objectives that were not realistic for female members. One commanding officer advised the instructors to set different standards for the women, given their stature and body strength, encouraging instructors to think in terms of "equivalent" rather than "equal" standards for training such as weight lifting.¹⁹⁴ Once the women of Troop 17 began their self-defense training, instructors realized that their performance could not be measured by the same standards as those applied to the men:

That was the big issue. We couldn't measure them with the same standard. We tried to. You know, when you looked at, we used to measure aggression, we used to look at willingness to get in the mix, and get [physically] involved. You know, we looked at all the motivational things in self-defense as how we scored you, for how you did. Of course,

¹⁹³ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

¹⁹⁴ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

the majority of the women weren't even convinced they wanted to do that, let alone be involved in the way that we were used to marking. So the marking level definitely dropped. We had a number of women held back for remedial training. I had a couple particularly myself, because of their lack of willingness to get involved in the day-to-day self-defense training. They just literally wouldn't. So . . . we would do special assessments on them, we would hold them back for training because they just weren't progressing the way we thought. But again, measuring with the male [standard] and saying that these women just weren't doing it. . . . We had a number of techniques that worked quite effective if you weren't big and strong. And those were the ones I tried to emphasize.¹⁹⁵

Jones's oral account illustrates that some women exercised their agency by resisting the gendered approach and the masculine standards that the RCMP attempted to impose on them. Women understood very quickly that their smaller size meant that they would have to be creative when subduing suspects.

Shannon Brandt, a special constable hired for surveillance duties in 1975, was just five foot two and a half inches and weighed 105 pounds when she arrived at Depot. Brandt recalled being pressured by instructors to be stronger, more vocal, and more aggressive in self-defense classes, where they would "fling" her around during ground fighting exercises. Brandt remembered thinking, "Isn't a surveillant neither seen nor heard?" in response to their pressure.¹⁹⁶ Brandt contested her instructors' injunctions to be more physical simply because it would not be valuable in the type of work she would be doing, demonstrating that female Mounties did exercise agency by refusing to adopt specific training methods. As Bill Jones remarked, "Some of the techniques we taught were dependent on strength . . . [but] a proper technique should be workable by anyone. You don't have to be big and strong to make a good technique work."¹⁹⁷ Both Jones and Brandt were creating a space for alternate constructions of policing, one that questioned concepts of physical strength and aggression as preconditions for effective policing. Jones maintained that the self-defense program needed adjustment to reflect bodies that were built differently – not because those bodies were weak and fragile and could not perform the work, but because the standard by which they were measured was not an inclusive standard.

¹⁹⁵ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

¹⁹⁶ Shannon Brandt, interview with author, 29 June 2010.

¹⁹⁷ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

The assumption that police officers had to be big and strong to be an effective police officer was an indication that male bodies were also regulated and constructed by the RCMP in gendered ways. Many Canadian men were unable to meet the RCMP's physical requirements during the application process, suggesting that the police force had a specific definition of an adult male figure of authority in mind, one that relied on a muscular and imposing stature and the ability to meet violence with appropriate levels of aggression. It was a prerequisite that went beyond the height and weight requirements once recruits began their training. Some men dropped out when they were unable, or unwilling, to meet the rigid physical standards; others who were unable to meet appropriate levels of violence and aggression in self-defense classes were eventually weeded out. Clearly, not all male applicants or recruits conformed to the RCMP's gendered understandings of masculinity, suggesting that negotiating gendered assumptions could be just as complex for the men the RCMP hired as it was for the women.

Instructors were not the only staff members who doubted the ability of women to meet the training program's physical requirements. Carol Hill was a twenty-four-year-old clerk typist working as support staff at the academy when Troop 17 arrived. Hill was not sure "females belonged in the force as regular members" because of their size. Hailing from a small farming community in Saskatchewan, Hill recalled male RCMP officers having had to break up fights in the local bar. This experience reinforced the importance of physical size for Hill, who was unconvinced that women possessed the strength necessary to police dangerous situations effectively.¹⁹⁸ Speculation about changes to the training program, and whether or not the women would be able to handle it, was rife. The *Gazette* later recorded that some instructors initially expected that the first item of kit to be issued to the women "should be 32 large white handkerchiefs to wipe the tears away." The magazine also reported that "gravelly voiced drill instructors soon found they could not use the full power of their voices and their vocabulary, once reserved for male members, was severely curtailed."¹⁹⁹

While most instructors kept their opinions about women in the RCMP to themselves, a communications instructor let the women of Troop 17 know his position

¹⁹⁸ Carol Hill, interview with author, 28 April 2008.

¹⁹⁹ "The First Troop," *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, 37:7-8 (1975): 10-11.

from the outset. Marianne Robson remembered that the “first class we had with him, we were all sitting in class, and he walked into our class, and he looked at us and he said, ‘What the fuck do you think you’re doing?’” Robson interpreted his comment to mean that the women had no right to be at the academy, much less sitting in his classroom. Robson felt that “the force didn’t really want us there; when I reflect on that to this day, there is absolutely no doubt in my mind.” As their training progressed, however, this instructor softened his stance toward the idea of female Mounties, and Robson remembered him fondly as one of her favourite instructors.²⁰⁰

Several women interviewed for this study indicated the unease of instructional staff over how to handle female recruits. Their unease reveals the extent of the gender divide between men and women in the RCMP’s training program. In the beginning, the women did not exactly know what to expect either, and several women from Troop 17 later acknowledged that they did not realize exactly what they were getting into. Marianne Robson commented that “to think you’re going to go into a men’s organization, and you’re going to be successful, you’re going to survive, and the world will be good, treatment will be equal” was a common but very naïve, expectation.²⁰¹ One woman brought her sewing machine with her, an extra piece of luggage that she probably did not have time to use since every waking moment of a recruit’s life was scheduled. The sight of the sewing machine most likely caused a certain degree of apprehension for instructors who were already anxious about training female Mounties.²⁰²

Another recruit, struggling up the steps of “C” Block with two large suitcases, asked her future drill sergeant who happened to be passing by to help her with her luggage. One instructor who was present recalled the sergeant replying, “You’re in a man’s outfit now, lady, carry your own bag!”²⁰³ The *Gazette* recounted the same incident in the following way: “She was quickly and quietly advised that recruits were not given such luxuries, after all, was she not earning the same wages as male recruits and thus subject to equal privilege?”²⁰⁴ Despite some variations in the reporting of the same

²⁰⁰ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²⁰¹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²⁰² Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

²⁰³ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

²⁰⁴ “The First Troop,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, 37:7-8 (1975): 10.

incident, the responses of the sergeant and the writer of the *Gazette* article to the arrival of women reflected the general unease over the blurring of gender roles that was taking place at Depot. The assertion that this female recruit was expected to act like a man and carry her own bags if she wanted to receive equal treatment conveyed the message that masculinity was the normative standard that women had to measure up to.

While this particular sergeant was clear about his expectations, others, instructors and recruits alike, decided to take a “wait and see” approach. It is important to remember that the men of the RCMP, like many Canadian men, also struggled with the shifts in gender relations that were taking place in society in the 1970s. Most were unsure of how to respond to the women who were now their fellow police officers. The concept of biological difference that had long been used to underpin the unequal power relations between men and women in Canadian society was suddenly cast into doubt at the academy. Men did not know whether it was appropriate to use gentlemanly deportment towards women, such as holding a door open or offering to carry a heavy load, now that women were receiving the same pay and training. Men had been socialized to treat women as the weaker, passive sex, and women were expected to respond with appreciation and deference toward men in return. But the sudden blurring of conventional gender roles created a great deal of uncertainty for men of all ranks. Following the arrival of women at Depot, “Senior male recruits could not quite make up their minds whether or not to hold doors open for the new female arrivals and for a while, it was humorous to observe the reaction on both sides,” an indication of the level of confusion that occurred.²⁰⁵ And as the above-noted incident with the suitcase illustrated, women continued to expect such behaviour from men making them complicit in reinforcing gendered roles to some extent and adding to the confusion.

The Media and the Female Police Body at Depot

The relationship between the media and the RCMP was a long and complex one that dated back to 1875, when regulations prohibiting Mounties from speaking with journalists were first introduced by the commissioner.²⁰⁶ The uneven relationship

²⁰⁵ “The First Troop,” 10.

²⁰⁶ For a more detailed analysis of the media, the RCMP, and the first female Mounties, see Reilly Schmidt, “‘The Greatest Man-Catcher of All’.”

between the two institutions continued well into the twentieth century, particularly during the 1960s and 70s, when, as noted above, commanding officers desired to use the media to promote a positive image of the police force, even while journalists were exposing a number of illicit RCMP activities. The relationship was often fractious, prompting Commr. William Higgitt to fine-tune the *RCMP Act* in 1970 with an addendum prohibiting Mounties from speaking with journalists without a commanding officer's knowledge or approval. At the same time, the RCMP recognized its dependence on the media to promote the police force as an iconic Canadian institution, as was the case with the RCMP's centennial celebrations in 1973. Positive press coverage reinforced the mythic image of the RCMP and ensured continued public respect, which translated into compliance from civilians in the field. The force also used the media to promote itself as a progressive and reform-minded institution interested in gender equity and diversity. Accordingly, media coverage of the arrival of women as members of the RCMP was viewed as important. The police force correctly anticipated the high level of national interest and positive public relations that would be generated by the hiring of women as Mounties.

In the interests of creating positive press coverage, journalists were granted unprecedented access to the first female recruits in 1974. Media scrutiny was both constitutive and representational, and a number of gender issues raised by the presence of female Mounties were constructed as matters of public interest and debate.²⁰⁷ Journalists were invited to tour the women's barracks, known as "C" Block, to report on the structural changes being implemented to accommodate the women. Several reported on the removal of the urinals and group showers and the installation of cubicles and bathtubs. Reporters also noted that new amenities, including a hand dryer for drying hair and laundry facilities, were being added. The structural changes to the barrack's washroom to accommodate female bodies became an unlikely symbol of the extent of the disruption to the RCMP's masculine foundations. Further, journalists' attention to the details of the renovations had a sexually suggestive element, evoking images of the women bathing and drying their hair in a predominantly male space. At the same time, these accounts were meant to calm civilian anxieties about changing gender roles. The

²⁰⁷ Rachel Woodward and Trish Winter, *Sexing the Solder: The Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army* (London: Routledge, 2007), 8.

reportage suggested that although women were joining a male institution, they still required female spaces where they could continue to engage in conventional feminine activities, such as doing laundry.²⁰⁸

The men of the RCMP, like their journalistic counterparts, were also anxious about the potential feminization of the RCMP and the challenge to male privilege the first female Mounties represented. In 1975, the *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette* published an article on Troop 17 that included a series of photographs of the women doing laundry, ironing, curling their hair, and polishing their shoes. The caption underneath reads, “Changes in training facilities were inevitable – laundry rooms – ironing rooms – hairdressing-rooms and a little less spit and a little more polish.”²⁰⁹ These depictions worked to maintain the masculine character of the RCMP and ease anxieties surrounding shifting understandings of gender. While male recruits undertook the same housekeeping activities, they were never photographed performing them until *Equinox* magazine published a feature article on the RCMP’s training program in 1985. A photograph of a male Mountie ironing his uniform appears in that article.²¹⁰ Until then, popular representations of Mounties did not depict male recruits engaged in what was considered to be feminine work. In the *Gazette*’s photographs, female Mounties were confined to their gendered roles, reassuring the largely male readership that female Mounties and their bodies continued to be governed by their feminine nature. The article reinforced the power relations that positioned female Mounties as the subordinate sex, shoring up the dominant gender relations of the early 1970s.

Several female recruits recalled a strong media presence throughout their six months of training, which had an adverse effect on the women.²¹¹ One woman remembered just wanting to fit in with the male recruits, noting that it was “hard to feel like everybody else when you’re getting all this special attention” from the media.²¹²

²⁰⁸ See “The RCMP Rookies: Mounties Get Their First Women,” *The Toronto Star*, 28 December 1974; Ruth Warick, “Basic Training Program Same for Fairer Sex,” *The Leader-Post* (Regina), 20 September 1974; O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In.”

²⁰⁹ “Women, Why Not?,” *Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette*, 37:7-8 (1975): 4.

²¹⁰ Leighton, “Red Serge and High Spirits,” 47.

²¹¹ One RCMP source described the media presence this way: “All branches of the press showed an extensive interest in their progress and the girls found themselves under additional pressure from the media.” See “The First Troop,” 11.

²¹² Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

Indeed, the women grew tired of all the publicity, a fact that was also recorded by the press.²¹³ Louise Ferguson recalled that during the first few days, “there was very little that went on there without somebody from some media somewhere, either Canadian or around the world. . . . They’d be there from places we hadn’t heard of.”²¹⁴ And Allison Palmer commented that the media coverage “was almost immediate because we would be walking from point A to point B and there would be a pile of photographers that were following us around and we would go into the mess hall and try to eat. . . . [There were] cameras over our shoulders and we’re trying to shovel food in” within the twenty minutes allotted for meals.²¹⁵ According to Marianne Robson, the media “was around us all the time” and “it was almost like being Paris Hilton with all the paparazzi; . . . they followed us around relentlessly.”²¹⁶ Additionally, the RCMP had a female civilian member taking photographs of the women throughout Troop 17’s training. The only place the media was not allowed was the dormitory, but this restriction was eventually circumvented. According to Carol Franklin, she received calls on the dormitory pay telephone from two radio stations in her home town asking for interviews.²¹⁷ The women were constantly in the media’s glare, creating extra pressure for the women as they adapted to an intense training schedule. Nevertheless, the RCMP continued to allow the media unprecedented access to the women.

Some of the academy’s staff also spent time giving media interviews. One corporal recalled being cautioned not to say anything controversial when the CBC, which was filming the women during a self-defense class, asked him questions. When a reporter asked him what he thought of women in self-defense, he answered that he thought they smelled a lot better than the men did, deflecting the gendered nature of the inquiry with humour.²¹⁸ Another senior officer at Depot recalled that the media asked him questions that were a “thinly veiled suggestion that women can’t hack it” at the academy, and that the “odd interviewer” wanted him to say something negative about the

²¹³ Primeau, “They Always Get Their Person.” Also Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²¹⁴ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

²¹⁵ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

²¹⁶ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²¹⁷ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

²¹⁸ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

women.²¹⁹ There was a disparity between two images represented in the press: the portrayal of the women in conventionally gendered terms that relied on understandings of women as the weaker sex; and the characterization of women who were meeting, and sometimes exceeding, the physical demands being placed on them in terms of the women losing their femininity.

This narrator also remembered that the local media in Regina frequently asked the academy to send female recruits to be interviewed. A member of the RCMP accompanied the women to these interviews since they had “no experience speaking publicly about the force,” a paternal approach that infantilized the women.²²⁰ But it was also an indication of the tight control the RCMP exerted over its recruits, indeed over all of its police officers. Commanding officers wanted the positive publicity the presence of women in the RCMP could generate, but they also wanted to control any information that the women volunteered. Members of the media were cognizant of the RCMP’s desire to promote the police force as a progressive institution, but they sometimes lost patience with the RCMP’s controlling tactics. Liz Primeau, a journalist with *The Vancouver Sun*, wrote that the “days I spend at training headquarters were an exercise in gentle persuasion and friendly frustration. The administration was anxious to show the force’s best face and eager, insistent even, that I understand the true spirit behind the RCMP. It became a grand public-relations tour.”²²¹ Primeau’s experience confirms that in light of the negative press the RCMP had received in the preceding years, the hiring of women was meant to improve public relations and help restore the tarnished image of the police force.

The gendered understanding that women were the weaker sex was still a dominant assumption in Canada in the 1970s. The idea was being challenged, though, and a growing discourse surrounding the value of health and fitness promoted jogging, weight-training, and swimming, as activities necessary in the maintenance of a healthy body. According to Laurie Schulze, definitions of the “ideal body” for men and women began to shift, and toned, muscular bodies became highly desirable for both. The emergence of the female bodybuilder into the mainstream of North American culture is

²¹⁹ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

²²⁰ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

²²¹ Primeau, “They Always Get Their Person.”

one example of this trend. But the muscular female body also posed a threat to ideas of biological difference and undermined understandings of gender differentiation.²²² The restructuring of the female body to accommodate employment equality with male police officers challenged social meanings of femininity and masculinity as well as cultural understandings of male and female bodies.

These discourses prompted journalists to take notice of the female body defying conventional wisdom at Depot. Photographic images of women lifting weights, participating in ground fighting exercises, firing revolvers, practicing drill, swimming, and jogging filled the pages of daily newspapers. *The Toronto Star*, in a feature article titled “The RCMP Rookies,” photographed Heather-Ann Phyllis lifting weights. The caption reads, “Staying in shape, Miss Phyllis works out with weights in the gymnasium.”²²³ Photographs of women engaged in activities normally reserved for men were unusual for Canadian readers in the 1970s. Indeed, for women to move their bodies in open, free, and active extension was, as Iris Young theorized, to “invite objectification.” Objectification functioned to keep women in their place, and was a means of suppressing shifts in interpretations of femininity.²²⁴ One journalist even observed that a “consulting gynecologist was hired” by the RCMP, and that the women, at their request, added an iron supplement to their diet, suggesting that the female body lacked the necessary nutrients to maintain the rigorous training standards of the academy.²²⁵ The response of the women to the physical demands of training, and their ability to meet the rigorous training standards of the RCMP, challenged this process of objectification.

In December 1974, *The Globe and Mail* published an article by Martin O’Malley titled “Women Mounties Fitting In.” O’Malley reported that after “weeks of strenuous physical training, the women report weight gains of up to 20 pounds. Cheryl Joyce, a 29-

²²² Laurie Schulze, “On the Muscle,” *Fabrications: Costume and the Female Body*, eds. Jane Gaines and Charlotte Herzog (New York: Routledge, 1990), 62-63. The popularity of bodybuilding grew in North America following the release in 1977 of a documentary on bodybuilding, *Pumping Iron*, which featured a group of men, notably Arnold Schwarzenegger (Mr. Universe) and Lou Ferrigno (Mr. Olympia), training for the Mr. Olympia contest. See <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076578/htm> [accessed 10 August 2013].

²²³ “The RCMP Rookies: Mounties Get Their First Women,” *The Toronto Star*, 28 December 1974.

²²⁴ Young, *On Female Body Experience*, 44.

²²⁵ Primeau, “They Always Get Their Person.”

year-old recruit from Saskatoon, says she has gained weight but, like the others, has lost inches on her waist and hips,” noting that before joining the RCMP, she could “hardly open a jar of pickles.”²²⁶ In another interview, Joyce commented, “Although pounds have been gained . . . the physical training is really making changes in body structure.”²²⁷ The media’s attention to the physical changes to the women’s bodies suggested that they were interested in whether female Mounties were becoming manly in appearance. Indeed, Joyce’s reference to changes in her body’s structure disturbed dominant notions of sex, gender, and sexuality and threatened to disrupt the socially constructed meanings of biological difference that supported unequal power relations between men and women.

Male journalists were interested in portraying men and women in dichotomous ways. When the women of the RCMP demonstrated that they were able to meet or exceed the physical requirements of Depot’s training program, they challenged the idea of women as the weaker sex and the belief that physical size and strength were necessary for effective policing. If a woman could do a man’s job, where did that leave men? Consequently, the women’s achievements were downplayed by journalists who preferred to intimate that the women, and their bodies, were somehow deviant and unfeminine for transgressing the dichotomous boundaries the media sought to reinforce.

Media reports about what the new female Mounties looked like fed gossip that preceded the women to their first postings. Rumours circulating between detachments in the RCMP insinuated that the “first couple of female troops at Depot resembled the Green Bay Packers,” and that the women had developed a masculine appearance during training.²²⁸ Allison Palmer recalled her first day at her new posting. When she approached the front counter to check in, one of the secretaries exclaimed, “That’s what you look like! We heard everybody coming out of Depot and you were going to be six axe handles wide. Well come on back, they’re all waiting to see what you look like.”²²⁹ Similarly, Marianne Robson remembered that when she reported for duty, the

²²⁶ Martin O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In,” *The Woman’s Globe and Mail*, 5 December 1974.

²²⁷ Marsha Erb, “I Feel Like a Pioneer In a Way,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 8 November 1974.

²²⁸ Robert Knuckle, *Beyond Reason: The Murder of a Mountie* (Dundas, ON: Kayson Publishing, 1997), 109.

²²⁹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

detachment secretary left her standing at the front counter before disappearing into a back office. A short time later, Robson noticed a number of people peeking around the corner to see what she looked like.²³⁰ These incidents illustrate that the media coverage of the women as manly in appearance following their training were highly effective.

It is significant that the women interviewed for this project did not have difficulties meeting the physical requirements at the academy, suggesting that journalists' assumptions that the women could not hack the training did not reflect the reality. Many of the women enjoyed the physical training, although they acknowledged that it was hard work. Janet Porter reminisced:

I loved the physical. I was one of five girls [from Troop 17] who were asked to come back and teach. They asked me to do, to be a phys ed teacher [at Depot] and I would have loved to do it, but I had to do about five years [in the field], I was told, once I got to my detachment . . . I was told that the only way I could do that, to be a phys ed teacher, was to work on the streets for five years.²³¹

Female recruits, like male recruits, did not all escape injury during training, and the strenuous nature of the physical training meant that it was not unusual to see injured recruits hobbling around the academy's grounds on crutches. Journalists seized on the opportunity to display the vulnerability of a woman's body after Constable Betty Glassman appeared at the graduation ceremonies dressed in her red serge uniform but standing on crutches with her leg heavily bandaged. The *Regina Leader-Post* captured the image of Glassman on crutches, which was featured in its coverage of Troop 17's graduation. The photograph fed suspicions that the rigorous training was too difficult, even harmful, for women, despite the fact that male recruits also suffered similar injuries.²³²

As these examples show, the media's attempts to shape public opinion about women in the RCMP were highly gendered. Barbara Freeman explains that journalism was itself a highly gendered occupation in Canada in the 1970s and masculine viewpoints dominated the industry. As well, the media were sex-segregated;

²³⁰ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²³¹ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

²³² "Allmand's Message to New Mounties is Look Forward," *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 March 1975.

newspapers had women's sections and women's magazines, and broadcast media such as the CBC presented "women's programming."²³³ Male journalists freely expressed their opposition to any destabilization of gender roles in Canadian society, as several political cartoons from the period featuring female Mounties demonstrate.²³⁴ Freeman observes that while the media tended to "exaggerate any deviance from acceptable cultural norms," they were at the same time fascinated with the "deviant and negative side of the 'feminine'" as a potential threat to social order.²³⁵ It was a tactic that was also employed by the British media. In 1997, following the announcement that the number of jobs open to women in the British military was increasing, the tabloid press featured a number of cartoons that "crudely sexualized representations of women soldiers." Images of "breasts bursting out of camouflage" implied that the female body did not fit either the uniform or the work of soldiering.²³⁶ Like their Canadian counterparts, British political cartoonists created a gendered discourse that sexualized the female body to counter the disruption that the presence of women in a male-dominated occupation posed.

Almost all the women of Troop 17 struggled with the media attention. Carol Hill, a clerk-typist at Depot, recalled that the arrival of the women was very high profile and that it must have been difficult for the women. Hill remembered that they were followed and photographed and that everything they did was scrutinized.²³⁷ Several female narrators cited the media's interest in them as the aspect of their time at the academy that they liked least. Trish O'Brien, who described the media attention as "horrible," recalled:

I guess it was all such a big event, bigger than what we even thought. We were just there to do our thing and excited about joining and we didn't even want the media there. But they were everywhere, watching us

²³³ Barbara Freeman, *The Satellite Sex: The Media and Women's Issues in English Canada, 1966-1971* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001), 13. Several sources used for this study were found in the women's sections of newspapers. For example, Martin O'Malley's "Women Mounties Fitting In," appeared in *The Woman's Globe and Mail*.

²³⁴ For example, Edd Ulschak, "With a Motto Like 'We Always Get Our Man' Recruiting is No Problem," *The Edmonton Journal*, 9 December 1970; Ulschak, "What's a Nice Girl Like You Doing in a Place Like This?," *The Edmonton Journal* reprinted in *The Telegraph Journal* (St. John, N.B.), 26 September 1974; John Collins, "Sorry Gals – Here's One Time You Don't Have the Last Word," *The Gazette* (Montreal), December 1970. LAC, John Collins Fonds/ C-107232.

²³⁵ Freeman, *The Satellite Sex*, 76.

²³⁶ Woodward and Winter, *Sexing the Soldier*, 85-86.

²³⁷ Carol Hill, interview with author, 28 April 2008.

eating, and doing our weights, and running and whatever. Sometimes your tongue would be down to your ankles and you'd have this camera in your face. And we'd want them to go away. And even in class you're listening to the lecture and they'd have the camera going. . . . After a while I really got annoyed; . . . that was one of the big things we found disturbing and distracting.²³⁸

Eventually the media gaze became too much for many in Troop 17. The women exercised their agency by resisting the RCMP's public relations strategy, complaining that they no longer wanted to be interviewed by journalists. The RCMP eventually limited the media's access and two female recruits were selected as spokespersons to respond to media requests.²³⁹

The "Special" Female Police Body

As the media's intense focus on Troop 17 continued, a second all-female troop quietly arrived at Depot in January 1975. Thirty-two women from across Canada formed Troop J (1975), an event that went unnoticed by the media.²⁴⁰ These female recruits were hired as special constables to work at Canadian airports, a National Airport Security Program initiated in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport on 12 March 1973.²⁴¹ The rank of special constable was not new in the RCMP, and it vanished and

²³⁸ Trish O'Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

²³⁹ Trish O'Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

²⁴⁰ Special constable troops were assigned a letter rather than a number, a practice that differentiated them from "regular" troops and reinforced the power hierarchy that existed among ranks in the RCMP.

²⁴¹ In the 1970s, aircraft hijackings were becoming frequent and a police presence at airports was viewed as a security measure. By 1975, the RCMP had trained 657 special constables specifically for duty at nine international and twenty domestic airports across Canada. Solicitor General Warren Allmand, *Annual Report: 1974-1975* (Ottawa: Solicitor General of Canada, 1975), 18; 24. The need was another reason the police force was opening up its ranks to married men for the first time. "Mounties May Recruit Married Men," *The Globe and Mail*, 13 January 1973.

reappeared at various points in RCMP history.²⁴² Uniformed special constables, or “specials” as they were known, met the same recruitment standards as regular members, carried firearms, testified in court, and had full police powers. They received the same training in academics, firearms, drill, swimming, self-defense, and physical training but all within a truncated training period of three, rather than six, months. The decision to hire women for uniformed special constable duties at Canadian airports was made in December 1973, five months before the decision to hire women as regular uniformed members.²⁴³

Throughout the 1970s, however, many regular members viewed the hiring of specials as a weakening of RCMP standards. In a hierarchical paramilitary institution in which rank was highly prized, specials were generally viewed with condescension because of their shortened training time, static postings, specialized duties, and lower pay. One special constable, commenting on the attitudes of regulars at Depot, noted that unless you had completed six months of training, you were not considered part of “the group.”²⁴⁴ Physical differences were often used by regular members to justify the exclusion of specials from police culture, where they were “treated terribly” according to one retired officer.²⁴⁵ The body of the male special constable, in particular, was contentious. Male specials hired for plainclothes duties such as surveillance had long hair, grew beards or moustaches, and were shorter in stature.²⁴⁶ Similarly, some female specials were shorter than regular female police officers. Shorter Mounties were not

²⁴² According to journalist Paul Palango, the rank was reinstated following World War II when the RCMP began to hire surveillance specialists to track Russian spies in Canada during the Cold War. Paul Palango, *The Last Guardians: The Crisis in the RCMP . . . and in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1998), 25. In 1975, the first Aboriginal special constables were hired specifically for work in Indigenous communities. They completed their training on 14 March and conformed “as closely as possible to the qualifications required for a regular member.” Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 295. Beginning in 1974, the RCMP hired special constables for specialized criminal surveillance work in Canada’s major cities. Pilots for RCMP aircraft, commanding officers’ drivers, and some members of the RCMP band also held the rank of special constable.

²⁴³ “Policewomen, Why Not?,” 3.

²⁴⁴ Shannon Brandt, interview with author, 29 June 2010.

²⁴⁵ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

²⁴⁶ The minimum height requirement for regular members in 1974 was five feet eight for men and five feet four inches for women. See O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In.” For a discussion on how the minimum physical qualifications for regular members fluctuated over one hundred years, see Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 17-20.

considered legitimate figures of civic authority by regular police officers since their bodies did not meet the RCMP's traditional physical standards of a police officer.

The idea that specials were somehow lesser police officers explains why, in part, the first female special constable troop went unnoticed by the media when they arrived at Depot in January 1975. Although they also performed drill exercises and wore a uniform,²⁴⁷ the women of Troop J were not photographed or interviewed and did not endure the constant media attention experienced by the members of Troop 17. The attention being paid to Troop 17, who were at the half-way point in their training by that time, distracted them from helping Troop J, who wanted, but did not receive, input about their training from a "big sister." It was a tradition at Depot that a "big brother" or a "big sister" from a senior troop was assigned to a junior troop to help them adjust to life at the academy. Carolyn Harper, a member of Troop J, described the lack of interaction between the two female troops in this way:

We were supposed to have a big sister [from Troop 17] but they didn't come near us. . . . I don't know if it was 'cause we were specials, whether they, um, didn't come near us and didn't think we weren't important enough, I don't know. And we actually complained to our corporal and said, "You know what, we haven't seen our big sister. Any help that we're getting, for uniform things and polishing our boots, and all that stuff, any information we're getting is from male troops. They're helping us out. We haven't seen one of the women come in and help us out at all. Never came to visit us, never talked to us, haven't given us any pointers whatsoever." And after we complained about that, two of them came over and talked to us for a while, and that was about it.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁷ Special constables assigned to airport duties in 1975 were issued brown tunics rather than red serge tunics. The difference in uniforms did not matter significantly to the public. Carolyn Harper recalled being photographed constantly by passengers arriving at the airport where she was stationed. "[W]e were the first RCMP policewomen that a lot of people from around the world saw in uniform. They would get off a plane, and you'd be standing there and they'd go, 'A Mountie, a female Mountie!' and they'd take your picture." Caroline Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

²⁴⁸ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010. This problem was remedied prior to the arrival of the second female regular troop in March. Maj. Doris Toole recommended that Cst. Cheryl Joyce, a member of Troop 17, be retained at Depot for an additional three weeks to "assist the members of Troop 36 (1975) in their initial phases of training." Joyce's terms of reference included advising the women on personal problems, providing training on kit upkeep and clothing standards, the general supervision of the women's quarters, and monitoring training classes. Maj. D.E. Toole, memorandum to the C.O., Depot Division, "Female Uniformed Member of the Force as Advisor," 25 February 1975. Author's copy.

Marianne Robson also remembered Troop J. When asked about why her cohort kept its distance from the specials, Robson reflected:

There was some jealousy between the two troops and we were not encouraged to assist them or mentor them in any way. Of course, by the time we were half way, Troop 17 was looking pretty tattered – hair cut off, no make-up, pretty muscular. We were a little jealous of how feminine the special troop of girls still looked, and of course up to that time we were the Queen Bees of Depot and these new gals were on our turf. . . . But again, the strangest thing was that [we] were [not] encouraged to fraternize with this group of young women.²⁴⁹

While members of Troop 17 may have been used to receiving all of the attention from male Mounties and the media, some were self-conscious about the changes to their bodies and were motivated by fears of appearing unfeminine when compared to the new female recruits entering Depot. It was an indication that women in the 1970s, while advocating for their full equality with men in male-dominated organizations, struggled with their changing roles and the perception that they were losing their femininity. This new group of female recruits challenged Troop 17's dominance as the only women at Depot. The members of Troop J were viewed more as competitors than as peers, demonstrating that women were not always united by gender in the 1970s, especially as they struggled with shifting definitions of femininity and equality.

Questions remain about the role that commanding officers played in diverting media attention away from the lower-ranking special constables. As Robson recalled, Troop 17 was never encouraged to fraternize with or assist the female special constables. Given the wariness of Troop 17 in dealing with the media, it is difficult to understand why the RCMP did not make members of Troop J available for interviews to help defray some of the pressure being felt by the female regulars. Clearly the view that the special constable did not meet the same standard for police officers within RCMP culture worked informally to exclude this particular group of women as other, doubly marginalizing them in a male-dominated hierarchy. The earnestness of commanding officers in ensuring that the first female troop would succeed demonstrates the degree to which the RCMP worked to manage media interpretations of the arrival of a select group of women into policing ranks.

²⁴⁹ Marianne Robson, email message to author, 4 July 2012.

Significantly, many of the women in Troop J initially thought they were being hired as regular police officers. According to Harper, none of them understood the differences between a special and regular constable when they were recruited. Harper recalled:

The story that we were all pretty much given by the recruiting officers was that they had one troop of females in the force, in Regina right now, and that this was the second troop of females that was going to go into the force and that they didn't know whether they were going to hire any more women. . . . And that this was a troop of airport specials that you were in uniform, you had all the same powers; the only thing that was different was that your station was at an airport. That was your detachment.²⁵⁰

According to Harper, all of the members of Troop J erroneously believed that they might be the last female troop to be trained by the RCMP. Yet, just one week after Troop 17 graduated on 3 March 1975, a second troop of female regular members arrived at Regina on 10 March. Clearly the RCMP continued to recruit women as regular police officers. The members of Troop J were “pretty irate” at this turn of events, and many suspected that they had been misled so that the RCMP could fill its quota for female special constables at airports.²⁵¹ The assertion that Troop J might be the last female troop spoke to the tenuous position of women in the RCMP and echoed the commissioner's promise to the DSRRs that “if it doesn't work, we'll just fold it up.” More importantly, the hierarchical structure of the RCMP in 1974 made it possible for recruiters to mislead the women without consequences. Recruits, male and female, were considered resources to be shaped and molded by the RCMP's managers and senior officers, who were accustomed to directing the lives of the lower ranks.

For the women of Troop J, their rights as individual workers were superseded by the power and authority of senior ranking officers who needed to fill staffing quotas to meet the federal government's demands that the RCMP police Canadian airports. By the

²⁵⁰ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

²⁵¹ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010. In 1975, Marc Lalonde, Minister Responsible for the Status of Women, reported that the first female recruits had completed their training in Regina and were now posted at detachments. He further noted that another ninety-six women were scheduled to complete their training by mid-1975, and that fifty-seven women had been hired as special constables to perform specialized duties such as airport patrols. Marc Lalonde, *Status of Women in Canada, 1975* (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975): 35.

time the women discovered that they were not regular police officers, they had invested a significant amount of time and resources in joining the RCMP, including quitting their jobs and relocating to Regina to go through training. Protesting this turn of events seemed to be a futile exercise for the female specials by the time they realized that they had been duped. Their example is significant because it reveals how the RCMP controlled not only the media's access to women at the academy, but the lives of lower-ranking officers who continued to be governed by a hierarchy that viewed men and women primarily as resources to be managed.

The New Police Body Graduates

As the women of Troop 17 prepared to graduate from Depot, the police force handpicked their postings.²⁵² A willingness to relocate anywhere in Canada was a well-known requirement of Canada's federal police force, one that was established with applicants early on in the recruitment process.²⁵³ It was a practice adopted from London's Metropolitan Police, which purposely selected men "who would to a degree be detached from their local community and thus able to exert impersonal authority."²⁵⁴ The policy of transferring recruits to detachments outside their home province for the first five years of their service emanated, according to former Staffing and Personnel members, from a belief "that members would be compromised by their old class-mates or buddies. By keeping the member isolated from their family and friends, we ensured their loyalty to the Force and ensured their objectivity when conducting investigations. In extremely rare cases, regular members were able to be transferred back to their home town."²⁵⁵ This policy of isolating recruits contributed significantly to the masculine and paramilitary culture of the RCMP, where unquestioned obedience, unclouded by attachments and emotions, was still perceived as a valuable character trait in police officers. Further, it ensured that police officers relied on each other for social interaction rather than

²⁵² All recruits were interviewed by staffing officers at the academy prior to their graduation. During the interview, recruits were given the opportunity to state their top three posting preferences. Not all requests for the first preferred posting were met, and some recruits were sent to postings they considered to be less than desirable. The RCMP had the final word on where it sent its personnel.

²⁵³ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 19.

²⁵⁴ Heidensohn, *Women in Control?*, 36.

²⁵⁵ Quoted in Sheldon Boles, ed. "Old Surrey Boys," *Veterans' Update*, 2nd ed. (Vancouver: RCMP Veterans' Association, 2012): unnumbered.

civilians, sometimes contributing to separation between the police and members of the community. We will see in the chapters that follow how this policy of isolation had significant ramifications for early female Mounties, particularly those experiencing harassment on the job.

This policy shifted over the years in much the same way the RCMP's marriage regulations and rates of pay fluctuated. The RCMP often changed its regulations during periods of low popularity, sluggish recruitment, or public criticism. A staffing shortage was one possible reason why in the early 1970s the RCMP, in an effort to attract applicants, changed its regulations to allow recruits to be posted to their home province.²⁵⁶ As they prepared to graduate in 1975, most of the women of Troop 17 were assigned to postings in their home provinces. By 1977, however, the policy had changed again and graduates were prohibited from being posted to their home communities.²⁵⁷

This policy was also well known to the Canadian public. Three months before Troop 17's graduation, Supt. William MacRae, when asked how the RCMP would handle the transfers of two married Mounties, commented, "They'd have to be posted together. We couldn't get into the marriage break-up business." Given the RCMP's policy of transferring single men anywhere in the country, especially when promoted, the issue of transferring two Mounties married to each other was problematic. MacRae acknowledged, however, that the issue was new for the RCMP and that "[w]e've never encountered it before,"²⁵⁸ suggesting the police force had yet to formulate a policy regarding married Mounties and transfers. Indeed, when the first marriage between

²⁵⁶ Recruitment numbers increased dramatically during the 1974/75 fiscal year, and post-secondary education began to be an important consideration in hiring decisions. That year, the RCMP hired 1,140 constables; 432 were married men and 113 were women; eighty-four held university degrees. Solicitor General of Canada, *Annual Report, 1974-1975*, 24. The higher recruitment numbers also represented an increase in the cost of running the RCMP. The solicitor general estimated that RCMP expenditures for 1974/75 would be \$251,540,000, an increase of 8.6 percent from the previous year and reflecting a 7.5 percent increase in manpower. "The 1974-75 Estimates of the RCMP," Public Safety Canada News Release, 28 March 1974. <http://www.publicsfety.gc.ca/lbrr/ctlg/shwttls-eng.aspx?d=PS&i-4723485.html> [accessed 24 June 2013].

²⁵⁷ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008. By 1987, the regulation was once again being rigidly enforced. See Anne Kyle, "RCMP Policy Can Separate Family Members at Times," *The Leader-Post* (Regina), 23 March 1987.

²⁵⁸ O'Malley, "Women Mounties Fitting In."

Mounties took place in November 1975, the RCMP still did not have a marriage policy in place.²⁵⁹

The graduation ceremonies for Troop 17 were held at the academy on 3 March 1975. Thirty of the original thirty-two recruits graduated.²⁶⁰ A number of dignitaries, including Commr. Maurice Nadon, Canada's solicitor general Warren Allmand, Saskatchewan's Social Services Minister Alex Taylor, and Helen Hunley, the solicitor-general for Alberta, were in attendance and made speeches.²⁶¹ Warren Allmand later confessed in an interview to being "choked up" while watching the "various demonstrations of swimming, self-defense and drill given by Canada's first female RCMP." Allmand commented that he was "moved and enthused. I felt I was observing an historical event in a force that has so much history."²⁶² He was not alone. Many of the 200 people present had tears in their eyes watching military marches and listening to strains of *Amazing Grace* during the ceremonies. Five fathers, members of the RCMP and other police forces, presented their daughters with their identification badges. In a departure from RCMP tradition, their mothers were also invited to participate in the presentation in "recognition of the silent role played by wives of RCMP officers." The bodies of the newest Mounties did not escape notice. One journalist reported that the women were "[s]lim, trim and striking in their red serge uniforms."²⁶³ The ever-present media covered the occasion; reports of the graduation made national headlines, and the ceremony was televised by the CBC.

²⁵⁹ RCMP regulations stated that an RCMP police officer had to live in the jurisdiction that he or she policed, making it impossible for married Mounties to live together in the same community since RCMP couples were not permitted to work at the same detachment. Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

²⁶⁰ One recruit purchased her discharge and returned to secretarial duties in the RCMP. Another converted to special constable for work at Winnipeg International Airport. "The First Troop," 11. Technically, all thirty-two women remained in the police force, albeit not all as regular uniformed police officers.

²⁶¹ Hunley was also present when three of the women were sworn in six months earlier in Alberta. Hunley was a veteran of World War II, a popular businesswoman, and a future lieutenant-governor of Alberta. She was invited by Troop 17 to address their class at the graduation ceremony and during the evening banquet. "Allmand's Message to New Mounties is Look Forward," *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 March 1975. Thank you to Rhonda Semple for drawing my attention to the likelihood that Hunley's achievements positioned her as an inspirational figure for Troop 17.

²⁶² "Allmand's Message to New Mounties is Look Forward," *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 March 1975.

²⁶³ "Allmand's Message to New Mounties is Look Forward," *Regina Leader-Post*, 4 March 1975.

In his speech to the graduates, the commissioner made the following observations:

There is one kind of training, however, that will depend entirely on you – the training of experience. It is up to you to find and profit from the lessons it holds. . . . I would like to leave you with the thought that since you are a part of one of society's control mechanisms, you have a responsibility to be sensitive to the legitimate needs and aspirations of the people you serve. The efforts you make will not go unnoticed.²⁶⁴

Cst. Janet Graham, who delivered the troop's valedictory address, offered another portrayal of what lay ahead for the first female Mounties, a version that proved to be prescient:

Many eyes will be upon us – some critical, some encouraging – watching to see if we will pass the test. It will be up to us to prove our worth. . . . Here at Depot we have been shown that we are capable of going beyond what we thought was our limit. With this in mind I'd like to close with this little proverb, "Our greatest glory lies not in never falling but in rising each time we fall."²⁶⁵

The experiences of the first female Mounties would indeed be noticed by the public, just as Nadon predicted. But Graham likely had her male counterparts rather than the public in mind when she stated that the women would have to prove their worth. Few could imagine the extent of the tests many would ultimately face. Even fewer could foresee the extent of the disruption to the image of the RCMP that their arrival at their first postings represented.

Conclusion

Many of the people interviewed for this study, both male and female, remembered their time at the training academy as one of the best times of their young lives. Indeed, several returned to Depot later in their careers as instructors. Although almost all of them described the physical demands placed on them as strenuous and the

²⁶⁴ Commissioner Maurice Nadon, "Address to Troop 17 at Their Graduation Parade," 3 March 1975. Hereinafter referred to as "Nadon Speech, 1975."

²⁶⁵ J.L. Graham, "Valedictory Address Troop 17 (1974/75)," 3 March 1975. RCMP Heritage Collection Unit Archives, Regina, Saskatchewan.

discipline as challenging, many remembered the experience fondly. Research on aging and memory has shown that memories “of late adolescence and young adulthood are remarkably resistant to diminution” because, at this stage in life, people are defining themselves as adults.²⁶⁶ This was certainly true for the people who were interviewed. The impression made by the paramilitary training experience had an important and lifelong impact, evidenced by the clarity and detail with which they recalled their Depot experiences. The RCMP’s rigorous training program clearly shaped the lives of young recruits who were embarking on a new career at a time when their self-identity was being shaped by the responsibilities of adulthood. The oral histories of the first women employed by the RCMP revealed that they considered their training experiences as the first step in a long and fulfilling career in policing.

For the RCMP, as a state apparatus with the authority to maintain the economic, cultural, and political dominance of the hegemonic group that supported it, the journey towards the full integration of women was undertaken reluctantly. It was a long and complex process that was characterized by considerable opposition to the idea of female Mounties. Several factors, rather than one overarching reason, informed the RCMP’s decision to hire women in 1974, not the least of which was the desire to appear reform-minded and progressive after years of negative press coverage. Following a number of very public criticisms and complaints, along with two royal commissions studying the RCMP’s illegal activities as well as criminal charges of rape and indecent assault of Indigenous women, commanding officers were anxious to repair the force’s image as a highly moral institution. The RCMP was also challenged by a number of civilian groups insisting that the police force reform its hiring policies. Women’s rights in society, particularly their employment rights, captured the attention of politicians, the media, and Canadians across the country during the hearings of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada. The commission’s findings applied political pressure on the federal government not only to enact legislation that guaranteed women rights in every sector of society, but to reform employment equity policies within its own institutions.

The RCMP delayed the inevitable, taking another four years to study the commission’s recommendations and to canvass police departments about their use of

²⁶⁶ Quoted in Valerie Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Guide for the Humanities and Social Sciences* (Toronto: Altamira Press, 2005), 39.

female police officers. It was not until a change in command and the emergence of internal unrest within RCMP ranks that the police force finally acted to admit women. Calls for unionization by the rank-and-file, who were no longer content to be viewed as docile bodies, created tensions over who controlled the labour of the male police body. The movement to unionize represented an unprecedented break from the traditions associated with the police force's paramilitary past, where the orders of commanding officers were unquestioned by the lower ranks, that had been trained to reflexively respond to hierarchical power relationships.

When the RCMP finally decided to hire women in 1974, the press coverage was a positive step for the RCMP from a public relations standpoint. Although the police force was challenged by the media's ongoing revelations of illicit RCMP activities, they also had to acknowledge their need of the media's assistance in repairing their image. Indeed, the idea of a female Mountie was so novel that the hiring of women proved to be a very effective diversion from the negative press reportage of the previous decade. Commanding officers engaged in a number of public relations initiatives that granted journalists unprecedented access to the academy, training staff, and Troop 17. The coordination of simultaneous swearing-in ceremonies was just one of many opportunities afforded to journalists, who reported on everything from the renovation of the barracks washrooms to the women's need for an iron supplement. The female police body was the focus of numerous discourses that speculated about the masculinization of the women as a result of the blurring of gendered roles. Journalists' reports demonstrated the disparity between opposition to changing gender relationships and the reality of the women's experiences.

Although the bodies of both male and female recruits were closely regulated by the RCMP at the academy, they were regulated differently. For more than a century, the RCMP had relied on a standard of masculinity whereby stature, physical strength, aggression, and the willingness to engage in violence were considered essential in transforming men from civilians to police officers. Men who were unable to meet these training requirements or who were unwilling to conform for the good of the troop were eventually dismissed or resigned as members of the RCMP. While women were also expected to meet these requirements, their bodies were understood in biological terms that subordinated them based on their size and stature. Some of the women exercised agency by resisting the use of aggression and violence, seeking alternative methods of

control that did not rely on the threat of physical force. Accordingly, some instructors had to adjust their training methods. These adjustments were often interpreted, however, as an acknowledgement that women's bodies were too weak and fragile to do police work. In reality, the standard by which women were being measured was not an inclusive one and failed to recognize that female police bodies were simply effective in a different way. The notion that women's bodies were less than ideal for policing duties prevailed, despite the women's interest in adopting alternatives to violence and aggression. The masculine foundations of the police force remained intact despite the entrance of thirty-two women into RCMP ranks. The dominant image of the male police body as representative of Canadian manhood was not dislodged by the presence of women at the training academy. However, few factored in the determination of the women themselves to be successful as police officers or their strong desire to "just do the work" that they were trained to do. That attitude did not hinder the RCMP, as the next chapter shows, from developing other ways to both reinforce and de-emphasize the femininity, and the authority, of female Mounties. Gender politics were at work in the design of the women's uniform, which reinforced the women's biological difference as a way to manage gender identities and maintain conventional gender relations within the RCMP.



Image 1. Cst. Cheryl Joyce receiving her badge from Commr. Maurice Nadon during Troop 17's graduation ceremony, 3 March 1975.

Source: Cheryl Joyce

Chapter 2.

Dressing the Female Police Body

Historically, the force was always concerned with femininity. . . .

They also wanted to ensure that you were separate, especially in dress uniform. That dress uniform had been men-only for one hundred and one years. A woman was gonna come in and wear that? Give your heads a friggin' shake!

There was no way we were gonna win that battle, although we tried. We tried.

Marianne Robson

We were absolutely devastated that we didn't have high browns like the guys.

Louise Ferguson

On 15 March 1990, the Prime Minister's Cabinet passed an Order-in-Council authorizing female members of the RCMP to wear the same Review Order dress uniform as their male counterparts. A short bulletin was issued to all detachments and departments of the RCMP for inclusion in the Uniform and Dress Manual. It indicated that from that point forward, all members were eligible to wear the same uniform. Female police officers were instructed to place their orders for Review Order items as "initial issue."¹ Those few terse lines belied the importance of the policy change to the women serving in the RCMP at the time, especially the women of Troop 17. Marianne Robson recalled the emotions she felt as she tried on the same uniform as the men for the first time: "I remember in 1990, when the force finally said that we were gonna have the same uniform, and picking up my Stetson . . . and taking it home and putting it on. And saying it took me sixteen years to get here [tears]. Sixteen long years, but I've got it now. Still got it. So that was a hard battle." Robson's emotional recollection of placing the Stetson hat on her head for the first time symbolized for her the end of a long and

¹ Bulletin No. UDM-53, "Unisex Review Order – Female Members," *Uniform and Dress Manual* (91-04-12). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

difficult struggle for full equality as a member of the RCMP. The policy regarding two different dress uniforms for men and women had been viewed by many of the first women to join the police force as a significant distinction. Robson felt that the difference in dress uniforms before 1990 “showed that they didn’t really want us there. They wanted to make sure that we were always different.”² It was a visual inequality that communicated women’s subordinate status within the RCMP and called into question their legitimacy as figures of civic authority.³

The female RCMP uniform, its development and implementation, provides important insights into the operation of power relationships between men and women in the RCMP in the 1970s. For more than a century, the RCMP uniform had conveyed ideas about manliness, power, state authority, and the nation. It was a readily identifiable symbol of Canada, one that bridged the past with the present and served as a reminder of Canada’s imperial ties with Britain. The Mountie uniform also communicated a number of ideas about social order, civic authority, punishment, citizenship, and power within Canadian society, and was a marker of selfhood for the individual who wore it. The uniform signified membership in a specific group within society and communicated ideas about class, race, sexual orientation, and gender, to those who were excluded from the dominant group. It signified the wearer’s transition from civilian to police officer, communicating a specialized knowledge of the rules and regulations of the RCMP. The uniform also shaped and restricted the body, connoting a standard of self-discipline attained through specific training methods. As one researcher noted, the uniform “absorbs individualities into a generalized and timeless masculinity while also connoting a control of emotion and a subordination to a larger rationality.”⁴ Given the importance of the male uniform in communicating specific values and ideals, the creation of an alternative uniform for women distanced them and their bodies from the masculine ideal and the characteristics that were deemed essential for effective policing.

As Robson’s oral history illustrates, female Mounties shared the same beliefs about the image and authority of the uniform that the men did, and they were eager to

² Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

³ Thank you to Yvonne Gall for the idea of “visual” equality. Yvonne Gall, prod. “First Ladies of the RCMP: The History of Women in the Force,” *The Current with Anna Maria Tremonti*, CBC Radio, 30 November 2011.

⁴ D.H.J. Morgan, quoted in Woodward and Winter, *Sexing the Soldier*, 66.

don the traditional red serge tunic, boots, and Stetson hat. Unbeknownst to the women of Troop 17, however, the RCMP had no intention of dressing them in the same uniform as male Mounties in 1974. Instead, the police force decided to negotiate tensions surrounding the hiring of women through the development of a distinct female uniform. It was a complex and often contradictory undertaking meant to appease a number of constituencies, including those in the media and the public who were opposed to the presence of women in the RCMP. A feminized uniform was viewed as one way to manage the smooth transition of women into policing ranks, while generating the positive publicity the RCMP was desirous of cultivating. While the force sought ways to reinforce conventional standards of femininity with a feminized version of the male uniform, it also sought to de-emphasize the women's sexuality. The female police body was to convey both authority and femininity, a fusion difficult to achieve in a society that viewed these concepts as dichotomous. As a result, practicality was often sacrificed for the sake of reinforcing notions of femininity and appropriate female attire. While male Mounties were also subject to a host of detailed rules and regulations about the wearing of their uniform and their personal appearance, the women were regulated in different ways, ways that emphasized their biological difference and positioned them as subordinate to men in the RCMP. The first female Mounties challenged and renegotiated these distinctions, making the dressing of the female police body a site of resistance to normative codes of masculinity long associated with the RCMP's image and history.

The following discussion focuses on the two types of RCMP uniform most recognizable to the Canadian public: the "Service Order" or daily operational uniform, and the "Review Order" or ceremonial red-serge dress uniform, to understand how the RCMP negotiated tensions over incorporating women into the rank-and-file.⁵

⁵ Other orders of dress included "Walking Out Order," formal attire comprised of a formal full-length blue skirt, white gloves, and a clutch purse for women and high-waisted overalls, congress boots, and box spurs for men. At the training academy, members of the drill instruction staff regularly wore "Service Order No. 2," which consisted of a blue jacket, Stathcona boots, spurs and riding breeches. Jacques Brunelle, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the 1990s: A Review of the Uniform, Dress and Kit of the RCMP* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Books, 1994), 55.

Women in Red Serge: Feminizing the Mountie Uniform

Dressing the female police body in the famous red serge tunic, Stetson hat, and Strathcona boots worn by male officers was never a consideration for the RCMP in 1974. Through the design of a “blazer type of uniform” for women “rather than the traditional uniform worn by male members,”⁶ the police force worked to appease a number of constituents the RCMP felt were concerned with the erosion of the masculine image of the RCMP. Their first priority, however, was to encourage Canadian women to apply to the police force through the design of an attractive uniform. They determined that designing a stylish, feminine uniform would help in their recruiting efforts. After all, it had been a successful strategy employed by the Canadian armed forces during World War II.⁷ The occupation of nursing had also redesigned its uniforms in the 1940s “to publicize the makeover their occupation was undergoing.” Toronto General Hospital, for instance, had consulted with an “internationally known” fashion designer to create an all-white uniform for its nurses.⁸ So, when the RCMP’s commissioner convened a planning committee to design a women’s uniform on 14 June 1974, the all-male committee “felt that the adoption of a distinctive uniform should coincide with recruitment, to produce an immediate and favourable impact” on Canadian women.⁹

One year earlier, in 1973, a small planning committee to study the possibility of hiring women was struck to make recommendations regarding a female uniform in the event that they were hired as regular members of the police force. At that time, the RCMP did not consult with the Canadian military but turned to the British military for advice. Dave Moore, a member of that committee, recalled that a female warrant officer from the British military was brought in to advise them on developing a uniform. The warrant officer, who was considered an expert on women in the military at that time, discussed various aspects of clothing female officers. Moore recalled:

⁶ James J. Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police* (North Battleford: Turner-Warwick Publications, Inc., 1990), 504. Boulton is considered the foremost authority on the history of the RCMP uniform.

⁷ Ruth Roach Pierson, *“They’re Still Women After All”: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 139.

⁸ Kathryn McPherson, “The Case of the Kissing Nurse,” 191.

⁹ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 505.

She was telling us about khaki underwear and bras and whatever. And then she said, “We did have one problem with pendulous breasts. You know, like Big Ben. Swings like this.” So that was the end of that [conversation]. . . . We didn’t go into any depth [about the uniform in our final recommendations]. It was a special uniform that “A” Directorate [administration] came up with.¹⁰

Breasts had evidently posed as much a problem for the British armed forces as they would for the men making decisions about the uniform and kit for the first female Mounties, as we will see. But it is unclear whether or not these initial recommendations, or the advice of the British warrant officer, were taken into consideration following the decision to hire women.

By April 1974, it was the RCMP’s Clothing and Equipment Design Committee (CEDC) that laid the groundwork, after they viewed “various women’s uniforms of the Canadian Armed Forces,” for the development of a Service Order uniform for women.¹¹ While the CEDC was working on a prototype, the RCMP turned to the executive director of Fashion Canada, “one of the best known Canadian designers”¹² at the time, to meet the force’s requirements of a stylish design.¹³ There is little doubt that the wish to have the women appear feminine guided the RCMP’s initial decisions in 1974:

A variety of alternatives showing both traditional uniforms and the blazer style had been developed in the Tailor Shop and then viewed by the Executive Director of Fashion Canada. Many of her suggestions were subsequently utilized. . . . The men’s brown jacket had already become somewhat demilitarized as a result of design modifications, and the

¹⁰ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

¹¹ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506. Recruits received their kit three times during twenty-two weeks of training at Depot: during their first week, between the 9th to 12th week, and between the 15th to 17th week. They received approximately fifty items of kit during training, including their uniforms, badges, Sam Browne, handcuffs, bedding, bathing suits, and Stetsons. In 2006, the cost of outfitting a male officer was \$3,142.97 and a female officer \$3,056.27. Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 371.

¹² Marsha Erb, “New Uniform Neat, Plain and Functional,” *Saskatoon Star Phoenix*, 8 November 1974.

¹³ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 504. The RCMP’s tailor shop is located in Ottawa, Ontario. In 1986, the RCMP employed twenty-five “cutters, tailors and pressers,” all with more twenty years of experience making red serge tunics for commanding officers, formal dress uniforms for men and women, and “special orders for those hard to fit.” See “RCMP Tailors Create Force’s Famed Uniforms,” *The Gazette* (Montreal), 9 July 1986.

Fashion Canada consultant considered the brown jacket to be adequately feminine in design.¹⁴

Clearly the Fashion Canada consultant wielded considerable influence over the feminization of the Mountie uniform. Her hiring as a consultant dispels the misconception that Maj. Doris Toole, Troop 17's advisor, designed the women's RCMP uniform or had input into the design.¹⁵ The men in the RCMP's tailor shop were instructed to take the designer's recommendations into consideration when creating a final product that "reflected the traditional uniform of the Force."¹⁶ The idea that the women's uniform was meant to reflect the traditional male uniform suggests that the female body only mirrored that of the "real" and iconic Mountie body in the minds of commanding officers. While their decisions were guided by conventional and dichotomous understandings of feminine and masculine apparel, they worked to emphasize the biological differences between male and female Mounties in a very visual way.

In the final months of 1974, senior RCMP tailor Albert Reiter and his staff had designed a number of prototypes for approval by the commissioner and commanding officers.¹⁷ Henri LeBlanc recalled, "I remember on a couple of occasions where we had any new piece of the uniform, they'd have someone come in and show us the uniform. We would look it over and then decide whether it was practical or not."¹⁸ Maj. Doris Toole, in Ottawa in mid-August 1974 to consult with the RCMP on policies regarding female Mounties prior to their swearing-in, was asked to attend one of these sessions held in the commissioner's board room. She recalled that several secretaries were also present and made suggestions that would make, in her opinion, the uniform even more feminine. Toole had been an advocate for changes to the women's military uniform, which had become feminized following the unification of the Canadian armed forces in

¹⁴ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 504-05.

¹⁵ Doris Toole, email communications with author, 8 July 2008 and 30 September 2011. Some of the narrators who were interviewed for this study erroneously believed that Toole was responsible for the design. Rod Olsen, interview with author, 10 January 2010; Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008. They were not alone. According to the authors of *Behind the Badge*, the women of Troop 17 and Troop J "participated in the uniform design discussions led by a female Major from the Canadian Forces, Major D.E. Toole." Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 172.

¹⁶ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 504.

¹⁷ "RCMP Tailors Create Force's Famed Uniforms."

¹⁸ Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

1964.¹⁹ For Toole, the feminization of the military uniform “played into men’s ideas of femininity” and did not reflect policies about women’s equality with men within the armed forces.²⁰ Toole voiced her concerns over the suggestions made by the secretaries, which were never acted on. That is likely because what the participants in the commissioner’s boardroom were viewing was the final design. Toole remembered that “at that meeting it was agreed that feedback from the Troop and Depot staff would be sought” before any further changes were made.²¹

The comments made by the commissioner’s female support staff likely encouraged commanding officers that they had made the right decision in creating a feminized version of the male uniform. It proved to be superficial reasoning that did not reflect the thinking of the women of Troop 17, or those who followed. None of the narrators interviewed for this research identified the opportunity to wear the famous red serge uniform as a reason they had applied to the RCMP. As noted in the previous chapter, the women were motivated to join the police force for a number of reasons, including altruistic concerns, job security, better pay, and improved employee benefits. Although the women who were hired in 1974 initially assumed that they would be wearing the same red serge Review Order uniform as the men, as the opening quotes illustrate, a stylish uniform was not a significant reason they were attracted to a career in the RCMP.

Adding to the complexity of the issue, however, was the fact that the women of Troop 17 were also socialized about appropriate feminine attire in the same way that their commanding officers and the commissioner’s secretarial staff were. They, too, were concerned about losing their feminine appearance while working in a male-dominated

¹⁹ The unification of the armed forces was an initiative of the Liberal government, who were interested in creating a military distinct from the British model, one that reflected Canadian sovereignty and a more modern force. *Bill C-90*, “An Act to Amend the National Defense Act,” was passed into law on 1 August 1964. See http://www.navalandmilitarymuseum.org/resource_pages/controversies/unification.html [accessed 22 May 2013].

²⁰ Post-unification, female military officers wore miniature braids on their uniform jackets, along with a small pin worn on the blouse, to denote their rank. When a woman removed her tunic, it was difficult to see her rank unless “you looked closely at the pin” according to Toole. It was not until the 1970s that the military returned to using braid on the women’s tunic to denote rank like that on the male uniform. Doris Toole, interview with author, October 10, 2008; email communication with author 18 October 2011.

²¹ Doris Toole, email communications with author, 8 July 2008 and 18 October 2011.

organization. For example, several female narrators recalled being dismayed over specific elements of the women's Review Order uniform that they considered "ugly," especially the shoes. Their dissatisfaction with ugly shoes suggests that commanding officers were not altogether inaccurate in their assessment of women wanting to appear fashionable. But, at the same time, the women wanted to wear the same Review Order uniform as the men as a demonstration of their full equality and authority as police officers. As Frances Heidensohn argues, much authority is symbolic, and a significant part of police authority is derived from the wearing of a uniform that must carry a "clear message" to the public about a police officer's status and powers.²²

Negotiating the issues surrounding a feminized uniform was a complex and sometimes contradictory exercise based on socially constructed notions of appropriately masculine or feminine apparel during a period when those understandings were changing. In the 1970s, sameness was often equated with equality, and the women recognized that the male Review Order uniform conveyed specific messages to the Canadian public about authority that a feminized version would, in their view, be unable to express. Nevertheless, those making the decisions about dressing the female police officer understood women in gendered terms and sought to appeal to women's interest in maintaining a fashionable appearance by designing a feminized version.

The RCMP was also interested in producing a uniform that communicated ideals about the female body in public spaces to placate any apprehensions Canadians may have had about female Mounties. For example, wearing pants while working in a professional office was not considered socially acceptable for women working in private industry or the public service. The police force's clothing policies for its female civilian staff reflected these values. Carol Hill, a personnel clerk working at the training academy in Regina in 1970, recalled that there was a dress code in place for female support staff working for the RCMP. Women were required to wear dresses or skirts; slacks were not permitted during office hours until several years later. When pants were allowed, female staff members were instructed to wear dressy pants suits only.²³ "[U]ntil the 1970s

²² Heidensohn, *Women in Control?*, 237.

²³ Carol Hill, interview with author, 28 April 2008. As late as 1986, female police officers wore their Service Order uniforms but were required to change "the trousers for a skirt when they [were] doing desk work." See "RCMP Tailors Create Force's Famed Uniforms."

trousers for women were still widely regarded as informal and inappropriate for any sort of work” and it was only then that “trousers for working women became generally acceptable.”²⁴

Dressing female Mounties in slacks for operational duties was a concern for the RCMP. They were not alone in their struggle in coming to terms with choosing practicality over appearance. In the 1970s, many female municipal police officers were required to wear a skirt with nylons not only for formal occasions but during operational duties as well. It proved to be highly problematic for Liz Davies, the first woman hired as a constable by a small municipal police department in British Columbia in 1973. Davies recalled being hired before the department had an official uniform for her; it was pieced together from one worn by an earlier policewoman who had worked in the fraud section but who resigned after the department began to hire women as constables:

My very first uniform was one that had belonged to my predecessor . . . and she was given a uniform, to wear for parades and this sort of thing. She was tall and slim. They said, “Here’s a skirt, you can have it altered.” So I took it down to the tailor. They made it fit me and it was shorter than [the policewoman’s] had been. Then I got black boots to go with it. We didn’t have a short-sleeved shirt then. Our only issue shirt was a long-sleeve shirt. I had a trench coat. I didn’t have a jacket. I just had my coat, a skirt and a long-sleeve shirt. After [six months when a second woman was hired] they tried to get us into culottes. They didn’t work at all. It was ludicrous. They seemed to be fighting putting us in pants. . . . We were expected to climb fences, we were expected to run after people and do all kinds of things in a uniform that wasn’t really workable. So they finally had to give in and give us pants.²⁵

One year later, in 1974, this particular police department issued its female constables with the same uniform as male officers, resolving the functional difficulties the women were having with their uniforms in the field.

²⁴ Valerie Steele, “Dressing for Work,” *Men and Women: Dressing the Part*, eds. Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989): 71.

²⁵ Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008. Policewomen from some municipal departments were being issued with uniforms by mid-century. For example, when the Ottawa police department hired its third policewoman Edna Harry, she was the first woman on that police force to be issued with a uniform in 1950. It consisted of a blouse, a skirt, and a cape. Cory Slaughter, “Women’s Journey Into Policing,” unpublished paper, Ottawa Police Service (2003): 1-5.

Perhaps the RCMP took the experiences of municipal police departments into account when they designed the female Service Order uniform, which allowed for the wearing of pants. When it came to the Review Order uniform, however, the RCMP's designers viewed slacks as unprofessional and unfeminine, especially while on parade during public events or when working in the detachment office. The RCMP had strict regulations regarding the appearance of its members, especially when in public. As one Dress and Department regulation stipulated in 1988, "Appearance in both dress and behaviour has become synonymous with the position as a member of the Force, and primarily, the basis on which he/she is judged and accepted by the public."²⁶ Commanders feared that pants on women would diminish the image and authority that the male Review Order uniform traditionally represented for many Canadians.

They also feared that the public would speculate that women who applied to work in a male-dominated institution and who engaged in masculine work were lesbians. Lesbian Mounties would have been a public relations disaster for the force during a time when gay men and women in Canada were still not "out" in the workplace. The Review Order uniform was intentionally designed to communicate notions of normative femininity to the civilian population and to defray potential characterizations of the women as lesbians or as manly. One senior officer recalled, "As time developed, we changed our attitudes. Before, you know, we insisted [female members] wear skirts and then we went into the slacks so it's a progression over the years. . . . We started off with a feminine type [of uniform before moving to the unisex style]."²⁷ It was a slow process that would take another sixteen years. Anxieties about women losing their femininity while working in a male-dominated environment were evident in the decisions being made about their uniforms. Displaying the femininity of female Mounties in public through the design of the Review Order uniform moved them outside the masculine workplace and into a more conventional realm where skirts, rather than slacks, were broadly accepted as normative dress for women.

The RCMP's interest in promoting the femininity of its female police officers to Canadians was still evident at the training academy by 1978. As the previous chapter demonstrated, recruits spent a considerable amount learning drill exercises, and troops

²⁶ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 231.

²⁷ Henri LeBlanc, interview with author, 14 October 2008.

practiced their manoeuvres in front of the public in the academy's parade square every day at noon. Cherise Marchand recollected that her troop was the only female troop in training at Depot between the end of May and October of that year: "[F]or that reason our drill instructor was . . . quite in a rush to get us on the parade square because of noon parade. So we were wearing skirts with nylons and all of that. So we did at least four of the five parades a week. So it was busy."²⁸ The sight of female Mounties parading in skirts and heels was a stark contrast to the display of men parading in Stetsons, breeches, and Strathcona boots. Not only did the women's parading provide a positive public relations opportunity for the RCMP, but their uniforms conveyed to the public that female Mounties were still feminine despite the fact that they were engaged in masculine activities at the academy such as marching and drill.

The RCMP sought to ameliorate its relationship with the media, which played a major role in the force's public relations strategy, despite the often uneasy relationship between journalists and the police force. As part of the promotion of the RCMP as a progressive institution, commanding officers fielded journalists' questions on the progress of the design committee in developing a uniform for the new female recruits. Following the announcement in May 1974 that women would be hired, Insp. J.J. Poirier told journalists, somewhat prematurely, "We have a uniform designed, but I haven't seen it yet. I assume it will have a skirt and also pants for some duties."²⁹ While Poirier knew that pants would be part of the uniform, his assurances conveyed to the Canadian public that they would only be required for "some" duties, a comment that implied the women's uniform would be appropriately feminine. Heterosexual appeal remained an important factor and played a role in appeasing those in the media who were opposed to the idea of women in the RCMP.

Later that year, following the completion of the new Review Order uniform for women, RCMP headquarters in Ottawa announced that it would be modeled for journalists and photographers at Government House, the residence of the governor-general. On 8 October 1974, a photograph of model Christine Shaikin wearing the Review Order uniform appeared in the *Ottawa Citizen* with the caption "A La RCMP."³⁰

²⁸ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

²⁹ "Ms to Join the Crimebusters," *The Province* (Vancouver), 25 May 1974.

³⁰ Barry Gravelle, "A La RCMP," *Ottawa Citizen*, 8 October 1974.

The use of French was likely a reference to the fact that the RCMP worked with a fashion consultant during the design. But it also implied that female Mounties were more interested in fashion than real police work, therefore minimizing the threat their presence in the RCMP posed to normative gender relationships. The feminized Review Order uniform symbolized the maintenance of gendered distinctions, reassuring members of the press and Canadians who were opposed to women in the RCMP, that there was little change in the status quo. Although the RCMP was no longer a male-only bastion of state power, the masculine identity of the police force remained intact and men remained firmly in control of Canadian law enforcement. But it was not that cut and dried, as the next chapter will show. Tensions over the threat to masculinity that the women posed were not confined to the issue of appropriate apparel. For the time being, however, the public and the media were reassured while the RCMP reaped the benefits of the positive press coverage that the hiring of women generated.

The official adoption of the women's Review Order dress uniform required the approval of the federal cabinet, given the importance of the male Review Order to the RCMP and "its significance to Canadian identity."³¹ Accordingly, Commr. Maurice Nadon reminded the solicitor-general that any change to the Review Order uniform required an Order-in-Council. His request was an urgent one, since the women had already started their training in Regina. On 3 October 1974, section 194 of the *RCMP Act* was revised by the federal cabinet to include a section on the female uniform. The revision read:

The significant uniform of the Force, the design of which is to be approved by the Minister, shall (a) in respect of male members, consist of felt hat, scarlet tunic, blue breeches with yellow cavalry strip, brown Strathcona boots and jack spurs and (b) in respect of female members, consist of cloth cap, scarlet tunic, blue skirt and black shoes, together with such other items of uniform as the Minister approves.³²

The distinctions were clear: women would wear a feminine version of the male Review Order uniform, a decision endorsed by the highest levels of the federal government.

³¹ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506.

³² The Order-in-Council was dated 25 February 1975. Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506.

Decisions regarding the women's Service Order uniform were also in the final stages. The design included a brown tunic similar to the male jacket but without breast pockets; blue ladies-style slacks with a yellow stripe; a blue knee-length skirt; a square leather purse with a shoulder strap and pouches to carry a firearm, bullets, and handcuffs; a beige long-sleeved blouse without pockets; and a black oxford-type walking shoe.³³ While the women's operational uniform bore a close resemblance to the male uniform, there was one significant departure.³⁴ The female uniform also included a triangular necktie, which was made of dark blue heavy cotton and included a white elastic strip with a metal hook that went around the neck and hooked onto a metal loop on the left hand side of the tie. It was not unusual in the 1970s for police departments to create an alternative to the male tie in an effort to maintain a woman's feminine appearance when wearing a uniform.



Image 2. The women's triangular necktie, c. 1975.

Source: RCMP Historical Collections Unit, Regina, Saskatchewan. Author photo.

For example, the first women to be hired as police officers by the police department in Seattle in 1976 wore "crossover ties that snapped in the front."³⁵ Similarly,

³³ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506.

³⁴ Erb, "New Uniform Neat, Plain and Functional"; "Mounties Get Their Woman," *The Victorian* (Victoria, BC), 5 March 1975.

³⁵ Adam Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue: How Women Changed the Face of Police Work* (Lake Forest, California: Behler Press, 2009), 73.

the Canadian military issued a “neck tab” to female personnel instead of a tie.³⁶ Jennifer Craik argues that a tie symbolizes professionalism and neatness but that the size, width, colour, and pattern, also convey specific social meanings about the wearer.³⁷ Although the women’s Service Order uniform included a tie, an indicator of authority and symbol of professionalism when worn by men, its triangular design suggested that a female Mountie possessed a different set of social attributes than her male counterpart. Further, a stylized tie prevented the women from appearing too masculine. As a social marker, the triangular necktie conveyed notions of femininity rather than civic authority. While a purse and a skirt situated female Mounties as too feminine to be legitimate police officers, wearing slacks and a tie positioned them as transgressive females. As a result, the female police body was situated as unstable, since it blurred dichotomous understandings of gender. It did not appear to be appropriately masculine or appropriately feminine when dressed in a uniform, adding to the complexity of discourses that positioned female biological difference as somehow inferior to the male standard.

Women in Red Serge: De-Sexualizing the Uniform

Not all RCMP officers involved in making decisions about how to dress female Mounties were comfortable with the decision to create a feminine and stylish uniform, an indication of the complex and sometimes contradictory nature of the decisions being made. According to Boulton, “An underlying principal in the decision to recruit female members was that they be given equal treatment wherever possible, so consideration of a major departure from the traditional uniform jacket might weaken the strength of the original intent” in hiring women.³⁸ The feminized uniform was problematic for some of the men on the planning committee:

After viewing the various combinations of clothing, the Board’s discussion centred about a jacket similar to the male garment. The blazer was thought to be more stylish, but it would be difficult to apply rank and service badges, and it did not identify with the men’s uniform. It was

³⁶ Doris Toole, email communication with author, 18 October 2011.

³⁷ Jennifer Craik, “The Cultural Politics of the Uniform,” *Fashion Theory* 7:2 (2003): 129.

³⁸ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506.

agreed that female members should be immediately recognizable as members of the RCMP and not confused by the public with other uniformed groups.³⁹

It proved to be a valid concern. In 1960, the Toronto Police Service had issued its policewomen with “derby style hats to prevent them from being mistaken for airline stewardesses or TTC [Toronto Transit Commission] guides.”⁴⁰ Canada’s first female police chief Lenna Bradburn, who began her policing career in Toronto, recalled having been mistaken for a post office employee once while wearing the feminized hat. Bradburn became a strong advocate for wearing the forage cap issued to male police officers, a regulation that did not change in Toronto until 1991. Differences in headgear for male and female officers were, for Bradburn, evidence of the systemic discrimination against women in policing.⁴¹

Designing a uniform that was feminine, non-sexual, and identifiable as a police uniform was an issue for a number of police departments across North America in the 1970s. In Seattle, one of the first female constables to be hired characterized her uniform in 1975 as a “cross between a meter maid and a flight attendant.” She explained:

Women’s pants at the time had zippers on the side and not on the front, and our pants conformed to this rule. Well, every time we wanted to use the bathroom, we had to take off our gun and utility belt. We had no back pockets to carry our radios like the men did, and we couldn’t carry notebooks in the front of our shirts because they thought our shirts should be proportional to women’s tailoring styles and the pockets were too small.⁴²

Pants not only transgressed gender barriers but emphasized, rather than concealed, the female form if they were worn too tightly. Yet, a stylish side zipper rather than a front closure made the slacks impractical, given all of the equipment that police officers carried around their waist.

³⁹ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 505.

⁴⁰ “Herstory: Milestones in the History of the Toronto Police Service,” http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/museum/herstory-milestones_in_the_history_of_tps_women.pdf/ [accessed 12 September 2012].

⁴¹ Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 40.

⁴² Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue*, 73.

When the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) hired its first female constables on 24 May 1974, the recruits were issued with an over-the-knee, straight-cut skirt, a tunic without breast pockets, and a Sam Browne holster. Jill Ryan recalled that she was later issued pants (with a side zipper) the first winter “because we were freezing in miniskirts and black nylons.” Ryan also received a blue blouse without pockets because the police force “didn’t want our ‘fullness’ to be even more apparent.”⁴³ The OPP’s desire to conceal a female police officer’s “fullness” by eliminating pockets from the female uniform was an indication that some police departments were also concerned with de-sexualizing the female police body. Similarly, commanding officers at a large urban police force in the United States required female officers to wear bras and t-shirts underneath their blouses in an effort to conceal their breasts. It was a rule designed to inhibit overt displays of female sexuality.⁴⁴

By feminizing the male uniform, many police departments, including the RCMP, were engaged in a tough balancing act. The problems became evident soon after the RCMP unwittingly issued the first females with blouses that emphasized their breasts. Several of the women hired in 1974 and 1975 complained that their blouses were transparent and, because they were made out of polyester, also clingy. They recounted how on cold days there were “all kinds of rude comments” from male co-workers when their nipples became obvious through the fabric.⁴⁵ The choice of fabric and the elimination of pockets on the blouses only served to enhance the female body rather than de-emphasize it. The elimination of pockets from all aspects of the dress and service order uniforms was based on the assumption that the public were less likely to notice the women’s breasts if the pockets were removed. In fact, the opposite was true for at least one male journalist observed that “womanly lines” were “accentuated by eliminating pockets from the red serge jacket” of the female Review Order uniform.⁴⁶ Obviously, attempts to both feminize and de-sexualize the uniform were not always successful.

⁴³ Jill Ryan, email communication with author, 27 May 2010.

⁴⁴ Jennifer C. Hunt, “The Logic of Sexism Among Police,” *Women and Criminal Justice* 1:2 (1990): 20.

⁴⁵ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁴⁶ O’Malley, “Women Mounties Fitting In.”



Image 3. The polyester blouse worn with the women's Service Order uniform.

Source: RCMP Historical Collections Unit, Regina, Saskatchewan. Author photo.

Breasts were also problematic for the men of the RCMP who were charged with organizing items for the kit that was to be issued to female members. Undergarments had been a part of the standard kit issued to all new recruits since the nineteenth century, and the all-male committee were initially undaunted by the prospect of choosing underwear for the first female recruits. Cameron Montgomery, who was involved in meetings concerning the development of the women's kit, remembered discussions about undergarments and bathing suits in this way:

We men were sitting around discussing the type of uniform and at each gathering there are certain ones who get excited about doing their work and they study hard and come to meetings and offer up some esoteric information. . . . One of these types mentioned in the meeting that he had been doing some research and he discovered that you could get bathing suits made with modesty panels. He was offering this information and we thought it would be a useful thing to have. Another fellow discovered somewhere that you could buy sports brassieres and that would clearly

be an advantage and we all agreed with that. That's how the meetings went.⁴⁷

For Montgomery it “soon became clear we had to get somebody else involved, maybe a female. . . . We didn't know what we were doing, that this isn't working, and we knew it wasn't. Like the ‘modesty panel,’ that tells you a lot doesn't it?”⁴⁸ The fact that the men did not consider it necessary to seek advice from a woman about female undergarments speaks to the tight control commanding officers were traditionally accustomed to exerting over all aspects of a recruit's tenure at Depot.

Decisions about the type of bathing suits issued to the women and concerns over modesty panels became moot after the suits became transparent following three months of wear in chlorinated water.⁴⁹ Journalist Colleen Slater-Smith later seized on the problems the bathing suits presented for the women of Troop 17, illustrating that female journalists at that time also wrote about female Mounties from a gendered perspective. Slater-Smith reported that the recruits were embarrassed by the suits and nervous about the “fall-out” of their breasts during rigorous swimming manoeuvres since the suits were cut low under the armpits.⁵⁰ Slater-Smith's reportage illustrates just how little privacy the women of Troop 17 were afforded during a time when discussions of bodies and bodily functions were considered to be private matters. Her close attention to the problems the female police body experienced during training exercises was a gendered approach that was similar to the news articles being written by male journalists. It reveals the degree to which some women working in male-dominated occupations, such as journalism, also accepted the socially constructed divisions between genders as normative even as their own careers were blurring gendered lines.

⁴⁷ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

⁴⁸ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

⁴⁹ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

⁵⁰ Colleen Slater-Smith, “Troop 17 Graduates,” *The Leader-Post* (Regina), 3 March 1975.



Image 4. The force-issued bathing suit with a “modesty” panel covering the crotch.

Source: RCMP Historical Collections Unit, Regina, Saskatchewan. Author photo.

Apart from the inadequacy of the bathing suits, the force-issued bras also fell short of the women’s needs. The sports bras were of poor quality and lacked proper support for physical training according to one member of Troop 17, Marianne Robson.⁵¹ It would take another two years for the RCMP to do away with issuing bras to female Mounties. The men of the RCMP finally determined that decisions regarding the type of undergarment the women wore were best left up to the women themselves:

Brassieres produced some consternation for the Force. It was attempted to select a regulation pattern and these were included in early lists of kit issue. It was quickly found to be impractical to provide uniform, comfortable personal items, and in December 1976, the C.E.D.C. agreed that no further issues would be made when the present stock was depleted.⁵²

It signaled the partial demise of the century-long tradition of RCMP control over every aspect of the uniform and kit issued to recruits.

The idea of employers deciding on the type of underclothes being worn by the men and women under their employ may seem odd by today’s employment standards.

⁵¹ Marianne Robson, email communication to author, 7 October 2011.

⁵² Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 514.

However, it was one way that differentiated the RCMP from other non-military organizations and workplaces, indeed, from other police forces in the 1970s. The paramilitary structure of the RCMP allowed commanding officers to view recruits and their bodies as resources to be managed and disciplined. The hierarchical structure of the RCMP demanded conformity, right down to the undergarments worn by recruits. Individualism was dissolved in an effort to train recruits to unquestioningly obey the power and authority of senior officers not only at the academy, but also once they were in the field. It explains why the officers charged with finding suitable items for the women's kit were initially unfazed by the task, and why they failed to consult any woman, even their wives, about the merits of the items they were selecting. As Bill Jones observed, the men at the top could not relinquish control because they were comfortable with the paramilitary approach to recruit training and merely assumed that by issuing orders, they could make everything work.⁵³ Supporting that structure and control was the unquestioned belief in white, male privilege and power as normative in Canadian law enforcement.

Despite the paternalistic concerns of commanding officers over the modesty of female recruits, aspects of the women's kit were openly sexualized by the men of the RCMP. Soon after the arrival of Troop 17, male recruits at the academy learned that the RCMP was issuing the women with brassieres. One instructor at Depot remembered that rumours developed that "RCMP" was stamped on the inside of the bras and an "open competition to see who could first get their hands on an issue brassiere" developed among male recruits.⁵⁴ The bras were considered a novel piece of kit that would not only make for an unusual piece of RCMP memorabilia, but would lend credence to stories of sexual conquest. The gossip about the brassieres was erroneous, however, as examples housed at the RCMP's Historical Collection Unit (HCU) demonstrate. Nevertheless, the contest and rumours rendered the first female recruits as sexual objects rather than police officers, informally excluding them from police culture. The competition over acquiring a force-issued bra served as a reminder to both the men and women of the RCMP that underneath the women's uniform was a sexual

⁵³ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

⁵⁴ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

female body that disrupted, rather than conformed, to the normative standards valued by the police force.



Image 5. RCMP-issued sports brassiere.

Source: RCMP Historical Collections Unit, Regina, Saskatchewan. Author photo.

Bodies of Resistance

Despite the tight control exerted over recruits by commanding officers, the women of Troop 17 attempted to define themselves as police officers and did not passively wait for the RCMP to make changes to their uniform and kit. The first female recruits contested decisions regarding their uniform by writing several memorandums to Depot's commanding officers.⁵⁵ Maj. Doris Toole and Cpl. Ken Wilkens, Troop 17's advisors, were also apprised of the problems and complaints, and lobbied on behalf of the women. Three pieces of the uniform in particular were singled out as requiring immediate change, first during training and later when the women were posted in the field. The first and most contentious was the purse that the women were expected to carry in the field. By the 1970s, the purse had evolved into a popular fashion accessory for women in North America, and it was a strong symbol of femininity that influenced the decisions of many police departments intent on feminizing the male uniform.

⁵⁵ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

Male Mounties wore a Sam Browne, which was designed to carry all of the equipment used by police officers when working on the street. It consisted of two components: a leather duty belt that carried a holster, revolver, and a handcuff pouch, plus a leather cross strap worn diagonally across the chest that was designed to hook onto the belt front and back to take weight off the hips.⁵⁶ The Sam Browne had been developed in 1852 by British general Sir Samuel Browne. It had been incorporated into the British army uniform by the time of the Anglo-South Africa War, where the equipment had been introduced to members of the NWMP. By 1904, it had become part of the RNWMP uniform for all field and parade duties. Although women working in the Canadian Forces Military Police wore “Sam Browne equipment to render the sidearm more visible,” the commissioner’s planning board of the RCMP “felt that this would not be desirable. It was decided that handbags would be provided . . . with appropriate compartments for a handgun and handcuffs.”⁵⁷

Once again, breasts proved to be a concern for commanding officers, who argued that a Sam Browne posed potential injury to a woman’s breasts. According to Boulton, “A medical opinion was sought from the Department of Veterans Affairs as to whether the movement or positioning of the cross strap would potentially produce breast discomfort or more serious consequences. It was reported that, while there might be some discomfort under certain circumstances, there would be no serious sequellae.”⁵⁸ Despite this advice, the RCMP remained committed to the idea of a handbag for female Mounties, not only out of paternalistic concern for their breasts, but as part of its strategy of feminizing the male uniform.

But a purse was an operational danger to both male and female officers, and pressure was exerted from the bottom up in many North American police departments to

⁵⁶ Sir Samuel James Browne (1824-1901) lost an arm during war service in India and developed the equipment to enable him to quickly draw his sabre from its scabbard with one hand. See <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/unif/sam-sb-cb-eng.html> [accessed 6 April 2013].

⁵⁷ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 511.

⁵⁸ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 511. Sequellae is defined as “an aftereffect of disease, condition, or injury; a secondary result.” <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sequela.html> [accessed 17 October 2011]. According to Dr. David Anderson, “an injury to breast tissue could cause a lump known as a ‘fat necrosis’,” which may mimic a malignant breast mass and “require a biopsy to rule out a cancer diagnosis.” David M. Anderson, M.D. email communication to author, 17 October 2011.

terminate its use for operational duties. In Los Angeles in 1972, women carried their revolvers in handbags but hoped that they would “eventually be permitted to wear a holster on the theory that a visible gun is much more intimidating than a hidden one.”⁵⁹ Further, a handbag was more easily accessible to a suspect during an altercation than a sidearm that was carried on a police officer’s person. A purse could also be dangerous if left unattended during emergencies. This was a concern for Canadian municipal police officer Liz Davies, who recalled being issued a shoulder bag in 1973 with a holster sewn into it for her snub-nosed revolver. It was her male peers who lobbied the police department to change her purse to a belt and holster because of the danger it posed:

How can it be safe, or we be safe, if this purse is left in a car? It happened more than once. You go to an accident, and it’s a serious accident; there was no EHS [Emergency Health Services] then. Our ambulance crew was from a fire hall. . . . Sometimes we were on the road and we’d get to an accident first. And more than once I’d be down in a ditch with an injured person, and I’d look back and there’d be the police cruiser door open and my purse sitting there. So they [male officers] stressed to the brass that you can’t do that. It’s not a workable thing.⁶⁰

In Toronto, where women also carried purses in 1974, it was Marlene Watson and not her male colleagues who successfully argued with her superiors that “it was easier to get a gun out of a holster than a purse.”⁶¹ Watson exercised her agency and her resistance resulted in the eventual issue of holsters to female police officers working with the Toronto police department. But the RCMP, while acknowledging the potential hazards of a purse, proposed that they could be secured under the uniform’s shoulder straps to prevent them from getting into the wrong hands or being left behind.⁶² It was highly unlikely that a fabric shoulder strap on a tunic would prevent a suspect from acquiring the purse in a violent situation. Nevertheless, the RCMP proceeded with its plans to issue a square brown handbag similar to the one being used by the Ontario Provincial Police at the time.

⁵⁹ “The Female Fuzz,” *Newsweek* 80 (23 October 1972): 117.

⁶⁰ Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.

⁶¹ Joe Fiorito, “Retiring Cop Broke Limits for Women,” 30 January 2008, <http://www.thestar.com/printArticle/298685.htm> [accessed 4 March 2008].

⁶² Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 511.

In December 1974, almost three months into Troop 17's training, duty belts to carry a revolver and handcuffs were temporarily authorized for use by the women following their complaints about the purse. However, problems persisted. Women working in the field later reported bruising and back problems from wearing duty belts. According to Pam Osborne

One problem women also have with the belt is the contact it makes with the hips as we tend to be curvier in that region and the belt, or more appropriately the equipment, rides on the curves. I had bruising on my hips for weeks when I started. Anytime I have been out of uniform and then put the belt back on, there is always a period of adjustment. . . . Members now-a-days wear suspenders with the gun belt to help lift it up off the hips.⁶³

The RCMP did not realize at the time that duty belts, when worn without the cross strap, resulted in extra weight resting on a woman's hips.

Despite being issued with duty belts, the women continued to actively resist the purse and applied pressure on the RCMP to make the necessary changes. In response, the CEDC set February 1975, just before the women graduated, as the final date for a decision regarding whether Sam Browne equipment would be issued. But commanding officers remained committed to the idea of a feminine look for the women and were reluctant to issue the Sam Browne to female Mounties. A Sam Browne was a distinctly manly piece of equipment steeped in military and RCMP tradition. The female police body threatened to disrupt the masculine image that was long associated with it since the strap would only draw attention to a woman's breasts and emphasize her sexuality. For the RCMP, a woman wearing a Sam Browne would further erode its credibility and disturb the public's image of the police force as a manly law enforcement agency.

While commanding officers debated over the Sam Browne, the women of Troop 17 were trained to use a two-inch .38 calibre snub-nosed revolver that fit into their

⁶³ Osborne also explained that today, duty belts can carry two magazine pouches with thirty rounds of ammunition, a service pistol carrying fifteen rounds of ammunition, pepper spray, a baton, handcuffs, flashlight, a portable radio, a key pouch, and a medical pouch with gloves. The total weight of a fully loaded duty belt is approximately fifteen to twenty pounds. Pam Osborne, email communication to author, 14 April 2009. For a more detailed discussion on duty belts and female police officers, see Rebecca Stone, "Sam Browne and Beyond: A Look at Duty Belts," *Police: The Law Enforcement Magazine* (November 2000), unnumbered.

purses, rather than a six-inch .45 calibre revolver that was worn with a Sam Browne and used by the men. It was another difference that the women thought would limit their full integration and acceptance as police officers. Louise Ferguson recalled,

We had a purse over our shoulder supposedly. Within a month from the end of training, and I think it was perhaps with [the assistance of Maj. Doris Toole], we made a lot of noise about carrying a stupid purse. They finally [relented] about a month out. Which meant that we had to retrain on the bigger guns and the whole works and graduate. We had all this extra shooting and all this extra work. It was fine. We were so happy to get real guns like everybody else. We were all worried about our credibility as it was, you know. Getting to the field and to show up with a purse, you could just see the guys would just laugh you right out of the car.⁶⁴

Troop 17 recognized that carrying a purse would erode their authority as police officers in the field. Their resistance was successful; the Sam Browne was adopted for wear with the women's Service Order uniform in time for their graduation in March 1975.⁶⁵ However, purses were still required when wearing the Review Order Uniform.

The second contentious issue concerned the footwear that the RCMP issued to the women. The black oxfords that the women wore with their operational uniforms were described as "nun's shoes" or "Salvation Army" shoes by some of the women interviewed for this research, an indication that the young women thought the design was very unflattering. Their resistance to the footwear demonstrates how the first female Mounties were sometimes complicit in perpetuating the tension between being treated as equals and displaying their femininity. Their desire for more attractive shoes reflected the level of socialization that had trained them to believe that to be appropriately feminine required attractive apparel. But it may also have been a way of expressing their fear that drab footwear would associate them with volunteer or religious service, work that was previously connected to conventional understandings of women's appropriate role in society. Female Mounties were working hard to establish their credibility as authority figures and the force-issued footwear, like the purse, was seen as diminishing their legitimacy as police officers. Whatever their motivation, there was a tension for the female recruits between wanting to be taken seriously as police officers and desiring to

⁶⁴ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁶⁵ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 511.

be feminine. It was a tension that often created confusion in the minds of their male colleagues.

The RCMP appeared to be uninterested in those parts of the female uniform the women found to be unflattering and impractical. But they were not immune to questions of appearance when it came to promoting a masculine image for male recruits. The RCMP was committed to portraying its police officers as gentlemen when in public, a nineteenth-century practice that continued throughout the twentieth century. Numerous handbooks for new recruits written over the decades provide evidence that the RCMP associated gentlemanly behaviour and self-discipline with a neat and clean appearance. For example, in one 1947 pamphlet titled *Prelude to Duty*, recruits were told to “Keep your uniform clean. There is no excuse for dirty shoes or dusty clothes . . . Before going on Parade have the other fellow check you and do the same for him. There are mirrors on each floor. Use them to inspect your personal appearance before leaving the room.” And in 1951, recruits were advised, “Always walk smartly about the ground of your training establishment. Be properly dressed whenever you leave your barrack room or the building in which you live. Do not wear part civilian clothes and part uniform. Always see that you are properly clad.”⁶⁶ Order and manliness were defined through the strict maintenance of a clean appearance, an immaculate uniform, and military deportment, all of which contributed to the ideal police body and a Mountie’s superiority over other men.

It was also meant to be attractive to women. The male RCMP officer dressed in scarlet serge aroused sexual interest while on display during public ceremonies at home and abroad. Indeed, the sexual attraction of women to the mounted police officer dressed in his red serge is still colloquially known in Canada as “scarlet fever.” The male Review Order uniform, with its scarlet tunic, riding boots, and breeches, served as a symbol of eroticism and sexuality, a hidden dimension that “explains their pervasive appeal and appropriation in popular culture and particularly in fashion.”⁶⁷ Although regulations regarding personal grooming for male Mounties reinforced notions of ideal manhood and appropriate masculine behaviour, the RCMP did not seek to control the sexuality of the male police body through its regulations or the design of its uniform. In fact, the dashing and romantic image that the Mountie uniform conveyed was still very

⁶⁶ Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 230-31.

⁶⁷ Craik, “The Cultural Politics of the Uniform,” 135.

much in evidence in the 1970s. Because the male uniform conveyed important ideas about state authority to Canadians, fastidious rules and regulations governing how to wear it properly became more important than the actual uniform and its accoutrements themselves.⁶⁸ In contrast, female Mounties were regulated differently. Public perceptions about women as Mounties were managed by the RCMP through feminization and the de-sexualizing of the women's uniform.

The women of Troop 17 were not only concerned with the appearance of their shoes. On a practical level, they encountered so much trouble with their ankles while wearing these shoes that they did not run double time in Depot during their first two weeks of training. Louise Ferguson described the shoes as having thick heels that were about an inch and a half high, a description that explains how ankle injuries could occur when running in them.⁶⁹ Major Doris Toole summarized the problem that the shoes posed for the women in an article for the *RCMP Gazette*:

To the hard-nosed traditionalist, the idea that women do not double everywhere during their first few weeks of training might appear on the surface to be coddling the female. But if one were to take the time to find out the reason for this difference, one would learn that the footwear issued was found to contribute to ankle injuries when running in troop formation.⁷⁰

Toole's insight regarding the shoes rectified at least this misperception that the women were receiving preferential treatment at Depot.

The oxford shoe issued to the women is important to this discussion for one more reason. As noted above, drill was important in the development of a troop's cohesion and discipline, and troops practiced their manoeuvres in front of the public daily. Traditionally, marching and drill positioned the male police body as an authoritative representative of the state during these public demonstrations. Central to these displays was the Mountie uniform. In particular, the Strathcona boots worn by male recruits created a stomping sound that conveyed authority, precision, and strength during drill

⁶⁸ Craik, "The Cultural Politics of the Uniform," 128.

⁶⁹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006. Two types of black pumps were authorized: one for wear with the Review Order uniform and a patent leather pump for the Walking Out Order. Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 513.

⁷⁰ Toole, "A View From the Sidelines," 8.

manoeuvres on the academy's parade square. In contrast, the heeled oxfords worn by the women could not duplicate the sound made by Strathconas no matter how hard the women stomped. One instructor recalled that when the women marched, they did not make noise "because they had those little shoes that clicked as opposed to guys with boots."⁷¹ The clicking noise made by the women's shoes not only suggested the improbability of the female body to meet male standards for paramilitary service, but situated femininity as an implausible substitute for the masculine heroic Mountie.

The issue of proper footwear for female police officers dogged other police forces too. Jill Ryan, who joined the OPP in September 1974, recalled that the pumps she was issued were extremely uncomfortable in cold weather. Although female constables in the OPP were issued pants for operational duties, they were required to wear a skirt and pumps for "dress" occasions, such as the time the Pope visited Ontario in 1984:

Because of the Pope's status (or perhaps his view on women doing a man's job), we women were required to wear our skirts and pumps. It was very cold that week. The men were wearing long johns under their pants, and there were we women wearing skirts and nylons. I took action by rallying all the women about our dilemma. We got our superiors to agree to allowing us to wear warmer black leotards – but only if we all had the same make/brand. I remember going to The Bay and buying out all of their stock! Nonetheless, I still remember standing out in the middle of a field with mud oozing into the top of my little pumps while the men stayed warm and dry with their ankle boots!⁷²

Ryan's example illustrates just how impractical some of the decisions about uniforms were. But it also indicates that other police departments were equally concerned that their female officers be dressed in appropriately feminine apparel. It shows not only that gendered decisions regarding uniforms and women in policing were widespread, but that female police officers across Canada actively resisted the impracticality of some of those decisions by offering solutions to the problems they were experiencing.

Complaints about footwear continued once Troop 17 began work in the field in 1975. Some women began to write memorandums to commanding officers complaining about the unsuitability of their footwear for policing, particularly in rural areas. Marianne

⁷¹ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

⁷² Jill Ryan, email communication to author, 27 May 2010.

Robson, who was stationed in a small prairie detachment, commented, “Even our shoes had heels on. I remember chasing [a] guy and running in damn heels. And then I got picked to test out boots. I mean that was the best thing ever, ankle boots.”⁷³ Allison Palmer had a dim view of the “armed forces-issued shoes with heels” and spent considerable amounts of time filling out paperwork to get them changed to ankle boots like those the men wore. According to Palmer,

[T]he flat oxfords didn’t make sense. The middle of the prairies. Most of us went to small towns, rural Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia. A lot of them went to outlying areas, they didn’t go to the Lower Mainland [Vancouver, British Columbia] area. . . . So I just kept writing. It all takes time. Finally my boss said . . . “Go buy them and I’ll pay for them out of the detachment.” I foot-chased through a ploughed field in high heels. Totally impractical.⁷⁴

Palmer’s supervisor was willing to circumvent the RCMP’s uniform regulations for the sake of practicality and safety, something a number of supervisors did when the first female constables were stationed at their detachments.

By 1979, female members were still registering complaints about the shoes. But changes to regulations regarding footwear required the approval of senior commanding officers at RCMP headquarters in Ottawa, an indication of the tight control that the police force maintained over every aspect of the women’s uniform. On 7 May, the OIC of Internal Affairs wrote to the director of Organization and Personnel regarding footwear, briefly outlining the history of the problems that women Mounties experienced with the oxfords:

It has come to our attention that female members (including Special Constables) are reluctant to wear the knee length skirt when employed on office duties (Service Order #1) as they are required to wear a flat heeled black oxford with this order of dress. Female members state the oxford, when wearing a skirt and nylons is unbecoming, is completely without style and certainly does nothing to enhance the uniform. The black oxford originally designed for Service Order #1 had a Cuban type heel, however, this shoe proved unacceptable as it caused twisted ankles when performing operational duties. As a result of complaints received, the shoe was changed to the present flat heeled oxford similar to male

⁷³ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

⁷⁴ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

members. To overcome this problem and provide female members, wishing to wear the knee length skirt while performing office duties or when ordered, with a stylish shoe, it is recommended the Orders of Dress be amended to allow the wearing of black shoes (pump) with Service Order #1. . . . Regular female members have already been issued these shoes for wear with Review and Walking out orders of dress.⁷⁵

According to this memorandum, initial complaints about the heeled shoes were addressed by replacing them with a flat version, ignoring women's complaints about the unattractiveness of the shoes. Tensions between the women's desire to appear attractive while satisfying their need for practicality proved difficult to resolve. Appeals to concerns about the overall appearance of the women's uniform indicated that the women clearly understood the RCMP's sensitivity to the image the uniform conveyed. What they did not realize, however, was that the RCMP was also concerned about the potential sexualization of the female body in uniform. An attractive shoe may have drawn attention to a woman's legs, creating an impression of unprofessionalism. But they also wanted their women officers to remain feminine and refused to issue them with ankle boots for operational duties similar to those the men wore. Although the RCMP eventually allowed its female members to wear the Review Order dress pumps while assigned to office duties, the flat-heeled oxford remained.

The third element of the uniform that female RCMP officers resisted was the cap they wore with both their Service Order and Review Order uniforms. As early as April 1974, the RCMP's CEDC studied the headdress worn by women in the military and in other police departments to determine what type of cap the female Mountie would wear. Consideration was never given to the women's wearing the male forage cap, the navy blue peaked hat with a vinyl visor and yellow hatband, normally worn for operational duties.⁷⁶ Instead, in June of that year, "the Planning Board concluded that the cap should be styled after the Montreal City Police female cap in felt, the colour of the male forage cap, with a peak, chinstrap and a yellow band. The standard regimental badge would be

⁷⁵ Memorandum, Officer in Charge Internal Affairs Branch to D.O.P., "Orders of Dress – Female Black Shoes (Pump)," RCMP file G-217-1-2 (7 May 1979). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

⁷⁶ "The term 'forage cap' originated with the light caps worn by the British cavalry in place of heavier and more ornate dress and service headdress when gathering forage for their mounts" in the nineteenth century. Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 9.

worn on the front, backed with blue.”⁷⁷ Although the cap was officially referred to as the women’s forage cap, many referred to it as a “pillbox” hat. The pillbox was not new to the police force for it had been the standard issue to men of all ranks in the NWMP in 1874. The term “pillbox,” according to James Boulton, “was suggested by the resemblance of the cap to the flat, cylindrical boxes used by pharmacists for dispensing tablets” in the nineteenth century.⁷⁸ In the 1960s, the pillbox returned as a woman’s fashion accessory when it was popularized by the first lady of the United States, Jacqueline Kennedy, who wore a pillbox hat to her husband’s inauguration.

All of the women interviewed for this research pointed to the pillbox hat as the thing they liked the least about their uniform for three reasons: it was impractical, it was unflattering, and it established the women as different from male Mounties. Louise Ferguson remembered that the “main difference from the male uniform was the funny little hat you couldn’t keep on your head. It was a pillbox kind of a hat.”⁷⁹ The hat routinely fell off the head when getting in and out of the vehicle or blew off in the wind. Although there was a chin strap designed to keep the hat in place, the women found it cumbersome when putting the hat on and off numerous times during a shift. For Kate Morton, who policed in a small town in the Maritimes, the women’s uniform “set me up as being different, especially the hat.”⁸⁰ In a decade when sameness was linked with equality in society, Morton sensed she was considered less than equal as an RCMP officer based on the different hat she wore. She disliked the pillbox so much that a fellow officer acquired a men’s forage cap for her to wear while on patrol, with the caveat that she would be careful not to let her commanding officer see her wearing it. Wearing a male forage cap was one way that Morton, and her male colleague, renegotiated and resisted the limitations placed on female Mounties by the RCMP’s desire to feminize the uniform.

Allison Palmer, who worked in rural areas on the prairies, used her hat to hold her notebook and packages of chewing gum while she was in the police cruiser

⁷⁷ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 506.

⁷⁸ James Boulton, *Head-Dress of the Canadian Mounted Police* (Calgary: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, 2000), 9.

⁷⁹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁸⁰ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

“because we had no shirt pocket.” When she had to get out of the car she “had to dump everything out to put the hat back on. I didn’t particularly like it because people did think you were a railway conductor. I was quite happy to get the [male] forage cap [in 1990].”⁸¹ Margaret Watson also disliked the pillbox: “I just didn’t like the pillbox hat. It was very unflattering. That was ugly . . . and it would give you a horrible headache.” On one occasion, Watson, who was tall and occasionally mistaken for a male police officer at night, arrested three gang members; she observes, “I think they got confused initially because it was so dark. When I pulled them over, I don’t think they would have pulled over if they’d known I was a woman. But I had a pillbox hat; they should’ve known that I wasn’t male.”⁸² The pillbox clearly identified her as a woman and in her mind it set her apart in the eyes of the public as less than authoritative.

Women in other police departments also disliked the impracticality of the hats they were issued in the 1970s. Jill Ryan described the hat she wore while on duty for the OPP as a “soft-sided hat which made us look like meter maids.” Although women in the OPP were authorized to wear the same uniform as their male colleagues by 1988, their hat remained different for some time afterward, a distinction that continued to separate them from male police officers.⁸³ Municipal police officer Liz Davies remembered that her department experimented with women’s hat styles before female members were issued the same uniform as the men in 1974. “My first hat was sort of a weird one. I remember it was a soft hat and it had a hard brim. It was sort of, it came up at the front and down at the back. It wasn’t like a man’s hat. . . . You ended up never wearing it because you couldn’t [keep it on your head]. It was an impractical thing. The bowler type was always kicking around [in the cruiser].”⁸⁴ While a feminine style of cap may have appealed to the men in charge of designing women’s police uniforms, the unworkability of the pillbox was something women across police agencies remembered, even decades later.

Apart from the impractical design of the hats, different headdress caused the public to confuse female police officers with women in other occupations who wore uniforms and performed service functions. During Expo ’86 in Vancouver, one female

⁸¹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

⁸² Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

⁸³ Jill Ryan, email communication with author, 27 May 2010.

⁸⁴ Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.

Mountie “complained of being repeatedly asked to take the photo of the tourist and the ‘Mountie,’ her male partner!”⁸⁵ Tourists did not consider female Mounties to be real RCMP officers because their uniforms were different. The RCMP did not alter the design of the pillbox even though it proved to be impractical, nor did they issue the women with the male forage cap until 1990, underscoring the extent of their commitment to the feminized version of the male uniform. Despite the addition of the Sam Browne to the women’s Service Order uniform, appeals by the women for further changes went unanswered, and the purse, shoes, and pillbox hat remained as official force issue. As a result, female recruits in subsequent troops persisted in their complaints.

Occasionally, instructors at Depot took action in an attempt to remedy the problems that the women were encountering and to register the women’s dissatisfaction with commanding officers. One instructor, Darryl Butler, described the women’s uniform as “terrible” and “ugly.” He remembered that by the time the third female troop went through the academy in 1975, the women were still complaining about the quality of the uniform and asking why it was different from the male uniform. Butler decided to take action and bring the issues to the attention of Depot’s training officer:

The [women complained that the] slacks were conformed for the female figure, had no pockets and were too bloody tight. The blues [tunics] they were given was a polyester thing, again with no pockets. The shoes were awful, the so-called boots they were given had no support. Their red serge was significantly different and the hat! Ugh. Why can’t they wear the same uniform as the men? So, being a bright resourceful fellow I took a couple of the better looking [women] . . . and got them dressed in all the male uniforms, including boots, breeches and Red Serge and had the Identification Section take photos. I prepared a report voicing the concerns that were given to me and sent along the copies of photographs to the Training Officer, Supt. Bill McRae. Well, did he rip my face off. “Do you know how much time and money was spent on designing this uniform?” I guess I didn’t. That was the end of that.⁸⁶

While recouping the costs incurred in designing the women’s uniform was probably a concern, commanding officers were unwilling to allow their female officers to transgress conventional understandings of gender and dress, and the RCMP remained intransigent. Butler’s photographs of women dressed in male uniforms opened a space for the

⁸⁵ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 250.

⁸⁶ Darryl Butler, note to author, 11 September 2008.

commanding officers of the RCMP to consider alternative representations of the police body, a consideration that was summarily dismissed out of hand. Nevertheless, the interview material reveals the number of ways female Mounties, with occasional help from male members, exercised their agency in resisting the uniform's design and its difference from the male version, exerting pressure on the police force to make changes.



Image 6. Troop 17 (1974/75) in Review Order uniform at their graduation ceremony in March 1975. The differences in the uniforms are evident.

Source: Ric Hall.

Maternity: Dressing the Pregnant Mountie

Although the RCMP may have felt that it had adequately handled this pressure by resolving a number of key complaints regarding the female uniform by 1975, they were unaware of how short-sighted their solutions were. Commanding officers failed to consider that many of the first women would eventually become pregnant and require a different uniform. The issue of pregnant police officers was a complex one that was often governed by paternalistic concerns for women during pregnancy, coupled with the conventional belief in dominant Canadian society that motherhood was a woman's most important role in life. Many Canadians, men and women, civilians and police officers, assumed that female Mounties would leave operational duties as soon as they discovered they were pregnant. Female RCMP officers, however, viewed the situation differently and actively resisted the restrictions placed on them when pregnant. Chapter

four will explore that resistance in greater detail. For now, the discussion below is limited to the design and implementation of the maternity uniform.

In the 1970s and 80s, some female Mounties hid their pregnancy, choosing to remain on active duty until their condition became too obvious and their uniforms could no longer accommodate their changing bodies. Three of the narrators interviewed for this research admitted to doing this after learning they were pregnant with their first child, knowing that once they divulged that they were pregnant, they would be removed from operational duties by their supervisors and transferred to more mundane administrative duties until they took maternity leave. Of course, not all female members resented their removal from the road. Some enjoyed the change in duties and a return to wearing civilian clothes, as was the case with one narrator. No matter what their preferences were, both groups of women were expected to wear civilian clothes, specifically maternity skirts and dresses that concealed their pregnancy, while assigned to light duties. It was a policy that not only eliminated the necessity and cost of designing a maternity uniform, but one that had the effect of diminishing the status of the women as police officers. Civilians conducting business at detachment offices often assumed that female Mounties were not police officers but public servants because they were dressed in civilian attire. It was a circumstance that frustrated some women during a time when they were working to establish their authority as police officers. In their eyes, the lack of an official uniform minimized their achievements.

As a result, pregnant Mounties across Canada lobbied the RCMP to design maternity wear that could be worn for both operational and administrative duties. It was not until 1987, however, that commanding officers finally relented and a maternity uniform was designed.⁸⁷ The uniform was created by the men of the RCMP's tailor shop in Ottawa without input from the women in the field. It conformed to the socially constructed idea, widely accepted in Canada in the 1980s, that a pregnant woman should dress modestly to hide her "condition." It was a gendered understanding of pregnancy and motherhood that women were expected to adopt. Accordingly, the tailors designed a maternity jumper, or dress, that had thick pleats, both front and back. The volume of fabric made the women feel as though they were wearing a tent that only

⁸⁷ Brunelle, *The Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the 1990s*, 44.

emphasized, rather than minimized, their expanding waistline. The fit of the uniform was uncomfortable: the hem of the shirt rode up over the belly, Velcro tabs and elastic casing on the waistband constricted movement, and the tie had a tendency to slide sideways off the belly. The uniform did not include a coat, and the force-issued shoes did not allow for the fact that a woman's feet swelled when pregnant.⁸⁸ It looked unprofessional, and female Mounties wanted a uniform that projected an image of authority. At the same time, they wanted a comfortable uniform with a contemporary look, an indication that the women were torn between dichotomous understandings of appearing feminine yet authoritative in much the same way they were with their operational and dress uniforms.

Safety was another concern for these women since the original design did not accommodate the wearing of a holster and a revolver. According to one media account, "Pregnant officers complained that the jumper-style dress with its pleated front and lack of loops made it impractical to wear a gun belt – and therefore impossible to perform their normal duties. . . . Besides, said some officers, the jumper did not command the prestige and authority of the regular uniform."⁸⁹ Female Mounties wanted to continue to wear their revolvers even when conducting administrative duties at the detachment, given that they were still police officers. The absence of a holster and revolver not only kept the maternity uniform feminine, but ensured that the women left the street for administrative duties as soon as they became pregnant.

Other police departments also struggled with how to clothe its pregnant police officers during this period. OPP officer Irena Lawrenson recollected that in 1989, pregnant police officers were given a clothing allowance to purchase civilian attire to wear when they were assigned to administrative duties since the OPP did not have a maternity uniform:

This resulted in the general public attending at a detachment refusing to acknowledge them as police officers and insisting to talk to a 'real' officer in uniform. Pregnant officers found this quite offensive. Some women enjoyed being in the office wearing maternity clothing, but there were other women that did not want to come in off the road, so they were not telling their supervisors about their pregnancies until their second

⁸⁸ Sandra Tullio-Pow, telephone interview with author, 2 March 2010.

⁸⁹ Barbara Wickens, "Dressing the Part," *Maclean's* 109:19 (6 May 1996): 11.

trimesters. As their bellies grew, they simply started wearing their police husband's trousers and gunbelt!⁹⁰

These problems prompted Lawrenson and Joan Tonner, a fellow police officer who was pregnant at the time, to design a maternity uniform. They worked with the OPP's tailor and developed a prototype. The uniform consisted of expandable pants with an elastic waistband and a loose, tent-shaped tunic top worn over the standard-issue shirt, which was left unbuttoned at the bottom to accommodate Tonner's belly. Lawrenson and Tonner brought their ideas to the OPP's Clothing and Equipment Committee, where Tonner modeled the prototype. To their surprise, it was approved for future production.⁹¹ Lawrenson and Tonner were active agents in resisting the status quo and showed considerable initiative in offering the police force an alternative that met the needs of women in the field.

Female Mounties, like their OPP counterparts, wanted to appear professional in a maternity uniform, and they continued to petition the force for changes. It was not until 1995 after numerous complaints that the RCMP turned, once again, to the fashion industry to create a new uniform. Sandra Tullio-Pow, an award-winning designer of maternity wear from Ryerson Polytechnic's school of fashion in Toronto, was hired. For her, the original RCMP maternity uniform minimized the authority of the women and impeded functionality, setting the women up as different as police officers.⁹² Tullio-Pow set out to create a maternity uniform that resembled the women's service order uniform as closely as possible. She interviewed nine pregnant Mounties from across Canada to identify the nature of the problems that they were having. As a result of their input, the new design included changes to the waistband of the new trousers for more flexibility during the course of pregnancy; a shirt with a longer and flared hemline and elastic in the middle of the back to prevent it from riding up; side front pockets in the shirt; a functional tie that was shorter and stayed in place over the pregnant belly; and a newly designed all-weather maternity coat. Four prototypes were created and tested in the field by female Mounties in May 1996. By the end of the year, Tullio-Pow's uniform was

⁹⁰ Irena Lawrenson, email communication with author, 27 May 2010.

⁹¹ Joan Tonner, email communication with author, 21 June 2010; Lawrenson, email communication with author, 27 May 2010.

⁹² Sandra Tullio-Pow, telephone interview with author, 2 March 2010.

adopted for standard issue by the RCMP after a few modifications were made based on the recommendations of the women wearing it.⁹³ Later that year, she entered her design in a juried exhibition sponsored by the International Textile Apparel Association, winning the award for Best Design for Functional Apparel.⁹⁴

Two equipment issues remained unresolved, however: where to carry a service revolver and the development of maternity body armour. Tullio-Pow recalled that the RCMP refused to issue shoulder holsters to any of its police officers, male or female, because of concerns that they were less secure in dangerous situations. Although pregnant OPP officers in the 1990s were allowed to carry their firearms in a shoulder holster, the issue of where a pregnant Mountie carried her weapon remained a contentious one in the RCMP. According to Tullio-Pow, although the original maternity uniform designed by RCMP tailors in 1987 did have

a little gizmo entry at the side where you could go in and supposedly get your gun [it was difficult to access]. Now you could never carry a holster around your pregnant waist and hold a gun. So it was kind of absurd from a functionality point of view [that shoulder holsters were not permitted]. . . . [I]t was very controversial at the time, and I wasn't allowed to really address those issues. So the issue that I [concentrated on] was image, prestige, authority; that's what I wanted the maternity uniform to portray, the same as it was for the operational uniform.⁹⁵

Commanding officers refused to budge on the issue of shoulder holsters, and Tullio-Pow's recommendations were never acted on. Maternity body armour was also contentious. Tuillio-Pow recalled:

I did go to see a bullet-proof vest manufacturer and um, you know the whole issue of body armour was a big one. And nobody wanted to go near that because there's quite a significant impact when the vest catches

⁹³ The media took great interest in the development of the Mountie maternity uniform and the pregnant police body. According to the *Toronto Star*, "Even Mounties Can Get Maternal." *Toronto Star*, "New Uniform for Mountie Mom," (5 September 1996). Also see Barbara Wickens, "Dressing the Part," *Maclean's* (6 May 1996): 11; Marcus Robinson, "Fashion: Mounted Police," *Saturday Night*, 111:8 (October 1996): 28; "Mounties' Maternity," *Design News* (August 1996). The RCMP also featured the new uniform in one of its publications: Brenda Zanin, "New Uniform Has Great Expectations," *Pony Express* (July/August 1998): 6.

⁹⁴ Nancy J. Owens, ed., "Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the International Textile and Apparel Association, Inc." (November 1998): 18-21.

⁹⁵ Sandra Tullio-Pow, telephone interview with author, 2 March 2010.

the bullet. And there was all kinds of, you know, concerns . . . would that harm the fetus? You know, nobody wanted to go there. But the one [pregnant] member that I had talked to, I think she was in Nova Scotia, she had one custom made for her. 'Cause she was that concerned. She was one of the ones that was working in a three-man detachment. . . . She was the only woman and she felt that she needed that and she went and paid for it herself.⁹⁶

Struggles over the design of the maternity uniform and where to carry operational equipment reveal the extent of the RCMP's commitment to removing pregnant Mounties from operational duties as soon as possible. Commanding officers were undoubtedly motivated by safety and liability concerns for female members and their fetuses. Nevertheless, their slow response to the needs of pregnant Mounties in the field indicates that the issue was more complex than paternalistic concern. Clearly, the RCMP felt that they alone were responsible for decisions concerning their personnel. Individual female police officers did not have the right to decide at what point in their pregnancy they left operational duties; instead, it was a decision that was made by supervisory personnel charged with managing the lower ranks.

These were familiar attitudes towards motherhood and maternity leave in many industries and occupations in Canada in the 1970s and 80s. At the time, employers reserved the right to manage maternity leave policies independent of government interference or the personal desires of the women involved.⁹⁷ While the RCMP's approach was not altogether unusual, what distinguished their policies from that of other occupations was the paramilitary structure of the police force that allowed for the absolute control that commanding officers exerted over lower-ranking members. Without an official and functional maternity uniform, a place for a service revolver, or body armour for protection, pregnant Mounties were left with little choice but to be reassigned to administrative duties as soon as their pregnancy became obvious.

⁹⁶ Sandra Tullio-Pow, telephone interview with author, 2 March 2010.

⁹⁷ Joan Sangster, "Debating Maternity Rights: Pacific Western Airlines and Flight Attendants' Struggle to 'Fly Pregnant' in the 1970s," *Work on Trial: Canadian Labour Law Struggles*, eds. Judy Fudge and Erick Tucker (Toronto: The Osgood Society for Canadian Legal History, 2010): 286.

Blurring the Uniform Divide: The Exceptions

In the 1980s, there were several female Mounties who complicated the RCMP's gendered attitudes toward the wearing of the uniform. Three women, in particular, had the opportunity to wear an altered version of the male Review Order uniform, including the red serge, boots, Sam Browne, and breeches. In each case, the uniforms were created for public events that promoted the police force, suggesting that the RCMP was sometimes willing to blur gendered lines in the interests of generating positive public relations or maintaining the image of the police force. Jackie Lewis, a special constable who was a lead singer in the RCMP band, recalled that in 1984 a Review Order red serge jacket based on the male design was created by RCMP tailors especially for her to wear during performances. And in 1988, in preparation for the band's tour to Italy, she was issued with custom-made breeches and boots to wear while on parade with the band.

When Lewis became pregnant with her first child in 1989, master tailor Albert Reiter designed a maternity uniform for her. Lewis, who also had input into the design, recalled, "This guy really knew what he was doing. He was a beautiful, beautiful man. I still remember the way that skirt felt and you know, if it weren't so unusual for a woman [to be] wearing a long navy blue skirt, I'd still be wearing it today. It was just so, so comfortable. . . . I remember doing a television show just a month before [my daughter] was born and nobody knew I was pregnant. That's how beautiful that red serge was."⁹⁸ While Lewis's maternity uniform was well-designed and comfortable, the fact that it hid her expanding body, even when eight months pregnant, illustrates the police force's adherence to social conventions that dictated a woman's pregnancy should not be obvious when in public. Further, Lewis's body was to remain inconspicuous during public performances, posing as little disruption as possible to the masculine image the RCMP wished to maintain.

There were two other women who were issued with a Review Order uniform custom-designed to resemble "the men's pattern."⁹⁹ In 1981, two female Mounties made their inaugural appearance as performers in the RCMP's Musical Ride, a first for women

⁹⁸ Jackie Lewis, telephone interview with author, 17 May 2010.

⁹⁹ Boulton, *Uniforms of the Canadian Mounted Police*, 509.

in the RCMP.¹⁰⁰ Christine Mackie and Joan Merk received significant attention from the public and the media as the only women among the thirty-two performers in the Ride, described by one journalist as the “public-relations pride and joy of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.”¹⁰¹ The men of the Ride were generally opposed to the women joining their ranks in 1981, and Mackie and Merk endured a significant amount of ill-treatment during the many months of equitation training courses they were required to complete.

In an interview for *Flare* magazine in 1982, journalist Charlotte Gray wrote that Merk “seemed to trigger more resentment among those men who didn’t like riding alongside women. Her curly blond hair and feminine figure made her conspicuous and she wasn’t allowed to forget it. Muttered comments about the way she rode, wore her uniform and did her stable duties were often made behind her back.”¹⁰² The men equated Merk’s appearance with female sexuality rather than masculine authority, and her body was deemed conspicuous rather than conforming, thereby disrupting the long-standing image of the Musical Ride. Comments about the way her uniform fit were particularly significant, given that her red serge tunic was specifically tailored for her by RCMP tailors. According to Kate Morton, who was also selected for the Musical Ride in 1980 but turned the position down, the women’s Ride uniform was specially ordered “with panels inserted into the bust area to accommodate their chests” and custom-made riding breeches to accommodate a woman’s hips. Female members also wore English riding boots rather than RCMP issue, unless their feet were large enough to wear the men’s boots.¹⁰³ These changes were useful and necessary to give the women’s uniform a tailored appearance and a visual consistency with the male uniform during performances.

¹⁰⁰ The development of the RCMP’s Musical Ride can be traced to 1876 and Fort Macleod in present-day Alberta. There, the NWMP performed mounted cavalry drills that were based on the mounted displays performed by British cavalry units. The Ride was performed publicly for the first time in 1901, becoming a “regular public entertainment” by 1904. Monique Cooper and Joel Walker, *The Spirit of the Ride: The RCMP Musical Ride* (Winnipeg, MB: Heartland, 2007), 17-18.

¹⁰¹ Charlotte Gray, “Musical Riders: It Wasn’t Easy Being the First Women on the RCMP Musical Ride,” *Flare* (July 1982), 41. Thank you to Don Klancher for bringing this reference to my attention. Also see Hall, *The Red Wall*, 181.

¹⁰² Gray, “Musical Riders,” 42. Jane Hall, one of Merk’s troop mates, commented that years afterward Merk was “very happy to have that experience over with. She seemed to have more bitter memories than good ones to show for it.” Hall, *The Red Wall*, 242.

¹⁰³ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

However, criticisms about Merk's body and the way she wore her custom-designed uniform illustrate that there was more at stake for the men of the Musical Ride than the actual uniforms. They viewed Merk's presence, indeed the presence of any woman on the Ride, as thwarting their privilege and dominance as representatives of Canada on the national and international stage. It was an opinion shared by some male civilians who were also opposed to women on the Ride. During one performance, a middle-aged man commented to a journalist, "There are only two [women] in there, according to the paper – and I think it's a disgrace. They shouldn't have let 'em in."¹⁰⁴ It was an indication that the RCMP was correct in anticipating that they would have to placate a number of constituents who were resistant to the idea of female Mounties. Despite the criticisms they received, Merk and Mackie were breaking significant ground as two of the few female Mounties permitted to wear a Review Order uniform similar to that worn by their male counterparts. The opposition that the blurring of the distinctions between male and female uniforms invoked demonstrates just how important the image of the red serge uniform was to the men of the RCMP. As an iconic symbol of Canada, the uniform was viewed as an exclusively masculine representation. But when worn on a female body, it transgressed the gendered boundaries that reinforced the masculine traditions of the police force and the discipline and authority it was designed to convey.

It would take another nine years before the remaining women in the RCMP were permitted to wear the same Review Order uniform as men. The long delay was evidence that the RCMP intended to maintain gendered systems of meaning regarding apparel for its police officers. However, a fresh controversy erupted in 1990, one that precipitated the eventual demise of the female Review Order uniform. As it had done so many times throughout its history, the RCMP managed the crisis by the introducing a policy change to distract the public and restore Canadians' confidence in the image of the police force. Baltej Singh Dhillon was the first practicing Sikh to be recruited as a member of the RCMP. Upon his hiring, Dhillon was told he would have to shave his beard and cease wearing his turban. Dhillon asked the RCMP to make an exception, arguing that

¹⁰⁴ Gray, "Musical Riders," 41. In August 2013, more than half of the riders performing on the Musical Ride and three of the Ride's supervisors were women. *Burnaby News Leader*, "Former Burnaby Member was Pioneer on RCMP Musical Ride," (20 August 2013). <http://www.burnabynewsleader.com/entertainment/220363191.html> [accessed 24 August 2013].

“wearing a turban was a religious duty that no devout Sikh can shirk,” and that being asked to do so was a violation of his religious rights under Canada’s *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. Dhillon’s request was forwarded to the federal government on the advice of the commissioner.¹⁰⁵ In the meantime, Dhillon was allowed to enter Depot and train wearing his turban while the government, who would not guarantee they would find in his favour, debated the issue.

Dhillon’s request sparked a heated national debate about immigration, multiculturalism, and the RCMP as an iconic symbol of Canada. Many Canadians viewed the Stetson hat as the centerpiece of the RCMP’s image, one that was recognizable around the world. Resistance to any renegotiation of that image was strong. Some 150,000 Canadians signed a petition, delivered to Parliament, urging the federal government not to amend the *RCMP Act* to permit the wearing of turbans.¹⁰⁶ Dhillon received hate mail and death threats while in training at Depot. The mayor of one town asked the RCMP not to post Dhillon to his community.¹⁰⁷ In Alberta, Herman Bittner created a crude and racist calendar that mocked Sikhs and demeaned their faith. Defending his actions to journalists Bittner asked, “Am I really a racist, or am I standing up and trying to save something that you know can be lost forever?”¹⁰⁸ In the end, the government did not agree with the protesters. On 15 March 1990, Canada’s solicitor general Pierre Cadieux announced that Dhillon could wear his turban as an RCMP officer.

The issue over an RCMP officer wearing a turban overshadowed one other significant development that day, one that received far less attention in the media. Cadieux also announced that, for the first time, female members of the RCMP would be

¹⁰⁵ RCMP commissioner Norman Inkster recommended to the federal government that the prohibition against turbans be lifted in April 1989. *The National*, “Sikh Mounties Permitted to Wear Turbans,” CBC Television, [originally aired 15 March 1990], <http://www.cbc.ca/archives/categories/society/crime-justice/Mounties-on-duty-a-history-of-the-rcmp-sikh-mounties.html> [accessed 1 June 2013].

¹⁰⁶ Navneet Sidhu, “Baltej Singh Dhillon: Making History: A Sikh Canadian Hero,” (2012) <http://www.canadiansikhheritage.ca/files/baltej%20singh%20dhillon.pdf> [accessed 6 January 2013].

¹⁰⁷ Larissa Cahute, “First Canadian Sikh Member of the RCMP Describes His ‘Struggle’,” *Vancouver Desi*, 24 June 2013, <http://www.vancouverdesi.com/news/nridiaspora/exhibit-sikh-heritage-museum-tells-of-turbans-troubles-times-in-b-c/466404> [accessed 24 June 2013].

¹⁰⁸ *Canada: A People’s History*, “Limits of Acceptance,” CBC Learning, <http://www.cbc.ca/history/EPISCONTENTSE1EP17CH2PA3LE.html> [accessed 14 June 2013].

allowed to wear the same Review Order uniform as male Mounties.¹⁰⁹ According to Rod Olsen, a staffing and personnel NCO at the time, Commr. Norman Inkster gave in to political pressure from the federal government to make the change.¹¹⁰ For the women of the RCMP it was a significant and unexpected turn of events. After sixteen years, it was seen by many female Mounties as a symbolic step toward their full inclusion as members of the RCMP. More importantly, the wearing of the same Review Order uniform signaled a blurring of the gendered distinctions between male and female Mounties in a very visible way.

The change was still in the future, however, and in the 1980s few women had the opportunity to cross the gender divide when it came to wearing a modified version of the male RCMP uniform. In 1982, when Mackie was asked whether she enjoyed being on tour with the Ride, she replied, “Being a member of the Ride is a great way to see the country and represent Canada abroad. You feel pretty proud of yourself up there in the red coat.”¹¹¹ Mackie’s pride in wearing a version of the male Review Order uniform as a member of the Musical Ride contrasts sharply with discourses from preceding decades that featured women as romantic foils to the manly Mountie, women who invariably succumbed to scarlet fever and the charms of the hero dressed in that nice red coat.

Conclusion

Following the police force’s decision to hire women in 1974, the RCMP’s commanding officers were primarily guided by the paramilitary ethos of the police force, a structure that reinforced their power and authority over recruits during training. At Depot, the RCMP traditionally stripped their recruits of their individual identities by instilling discipline and ensuring conformity, both of which were equated with professionalism. The uniform was central to this enterprise: civilian clothing was substituted for a progression of uniforms three times during the six months that the recruits were at the academy, ranging from coveralls to the Review Order uniform. This progression was a visual representation of the stages of a recruit’s transformation from a

¹⁰⁹ An Order-in-Council was passed on 15 March 1990 stating, “[A]ll members shall wear the same significant uniform of the RCMP.” Bulletin, “Unisex Review Order – Female Members,” RCMP file UDM 53 (28 February 1991). Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

¹¹⁰ Rod Olsen, interview with author, 4 January 2010.

¹¹¹ Christine Mackie quoted in Gray, “Musical Riders,” 44.

civilian identity to a police identity. The eventual acquisition of the Review Order uniform signified that the RCMP recruit was now accountable to, and under the control of, state authority.

The commanding officers who were making decisions about how to dress the female police body relied on this traditional approach. Not only did they rely on RCMP tradition, but they were also guided by a number of social conventions surrounding appropriate male and female attire in operation in Canada. These considerations were adopted to demonstrate to members of the public that female Mounties were still feminine and did not represent a threat to Canadian manhood. At the same time, the RCMP was cognizant of the masculine and authoritative image the male uniform conveyed. Consequently, the police force was eager to emphasize the gendered distinctions between male and female police officers through their apparel. An alternative uniform was viewed as necessary to ease tensions surrounding the arrival of women and ensure their smooth transition into the rank-and-file. Given the force's concern over its tarnished image and its desire to generate positive publicity, appeasing a number of constituents opposed to the idea of female Mounties, including members of the media, the public, and male Mounties, was an important consideration. Placating these interests was often a complex undertaking and attempts to balance them were not always successful.

The design of a separate uniform also ensured that masculinity would continue to dominate RCMP culture. In this respect, commanding officers in most North American police departments, including the RCMP, were similarly motivated. Many, if not all, were guided by current understandings of femininity and masculinity when designing a uniform for women. It was within the historical context of the 1970s, when appropriately feminine dress excluded pieces of clothing that were deemed to be male, such as neckties, ankle boots, forage caps, and pants, that gender was performed. The daily ritual of donning a uniform and the strapping on of special equipment for operational law enforcement duties had heretofore been a male preserve. Further, the wearing of breeches, riding boots, spurs, lanyards, and a Stetson hat during public events and ceremonies was a highly gendered performance that positioned masculinity as the definitive identity of the RCMP.

Although the RCMP attempted to design an attractive but practical female uniform, the design was also intended to control the sexuality of female RCMP officers. Efforts were made to minimize the female police body as a site of sexual desire. It was viewed as in need of regulation and containment, rather than as representative of civic authority and fully equal to the male police body. The seemingly contradictory impulses, between feminizing and de-feminizing the women's uniform, speaks to the delicate balancing act the RCMP was engaged in as it sought to maintain the feminine appearance of the women yet minimize their sexuality. In the end, the RCMP's insistence on continuing the tradition of designing and controlling every aspect of a recruit's uniform and kit meant that the gendered lines between male and female uniforms would not be crossed except in very exceptional circumstances.

For almost two decades, the women of the RCMP exercised considerable agency by lobbying for changes to their uniform, including the right to wear the same uniform as their male colleagues. Many male Mounties assisted them as they argued for change, particularly when female Mounties found their uniform unworkable in the field. However, the women's opinions about their uniform were also informed by a desire to maintain a feminine appearance, adding to the complexity of their resistance to commanding officers' decisions. They were torn between wanting to appear authoritative yet feminine. Despite the contradictions, almost all of the female Mounties who were interviewed for this research recalled that they were eager to wear the same uniform as their male counterparts, suggesting that they shared the same beliefs about the image and authority of the RCMP uniform as the men did. But the RCMP insisted on conforming to conventional notions of masculinity and femininity when it came to dressing its police officers. The hierarchal control exercised by commanding officers silenced any resistance the women initiated and made changes slow in coming.

Few of the men who were making these important decisions realized that the first female Mounties were attempting to create an occupational identity equal to that of male police officers. The oral histories reveal that female Mounties were clearly interested in defining themselves as police officers and in negotiating the tensions between social and occupational expectations. Despite the gendered assumptions that the difference in uniforms conveyed, the first female RCMP officers were determined to offer the Canadian public an alternative representation of the Mountie, one that situated them as figures of authority in their own right and on their own terms. While the public eventually

accepted the idea of a female Mountie dressed in a nice red coat, the men of the RCMP were not so accepting and police culture was not so easily changed.

Chapter 3.

Opposition to Female Bodies of Authority

Somewhere along the line, someone forgot to tell us in training that it wasn't the public we had to worry about; it was our own members we had to fear. If more of us knew then that we would not be greeted with "open arms" perhaps we'd have been more prepared.

Female RCMP Officer, Anonymous Survey Respondent, 1986.

The challenges that the RCMP faced over dressing the female police body and the abilities of the women of Troop 17 to meet the physical demands of recruit training were soon overshadowed by other concerns. Following their graduation from the training academy, larger questions surfaced about the reception that the first female Mounties might receive at their first detachments. How would rank-and-file Mounties and their supervisors react to the arrival of women at their first postings? How would the wives of RCMP officers respond to the presence of the young female police officers working with their husbands? Would members of the public respect women as figures of civic authority? How could women meet the physical demands necessary in effectively enforcing the law? Would male police officers be placed in danger as a result of the physical limitations of the women? Were women capable of providing backup during violence? Would they be able to exercise their powers of arrest with sufficient physical force?

This chapter explores these questions through an examination of the operational policing experiences of female Mounties between 1975 and 1990. Three groups who opposed women's presence in the RCMP figured prominently in the oral histories of the women who were interviewed for this research, and, accordingly, are given detailed consideration in this chapter. The interaction of women in the RCMP with Mountie wives, male members of the public, and the RCMP's non-commissioned officers (NCOs), illustrates just how women, and the female police body, disrupted the masculine image of the RCMP. Responses to female Mounties within these groups were varied and, at

times, unpredictable. While the RCMP worked to placate a number of constituents opposed to female RCMP officers, as the previous chapter demonstrated, these three groups emerged as significant arbiters of power and the gender relations that shaped the policing experiences, and in some cases the careers, of women in the RCMP.

Mountie wives understood their position within the RCMP in gendered terms and employed a number of tactics, including shunning and gossip, to register their resistance to female Mounties. Wives' unpaid work for the RCMP for decades prior to the arrival of women officers in 1974 afforded them a place within the institution that supported the masculinity of the Mountie hero. Seen as the feminine compliment to the manly Mountie, wives also adopted a number of gendered attitudes about women in the force that mirrored those expressed by their husbands. But wives were not the only obstacle the women of the RCMP encountered. Men in the communities where the women policed responded to female Mounties in a variety of gendered ways. The most striking was the use of aggression and violence as a number of male civilians actively negotiated their masculine identity by resisting arrest by a woman. Their resistance, however, not only afforded the women of the RCMP opportunities to blur dichotomous understandings of gender, but to exercise their agency by introducing alternatives to the use of force.

Similarly, ideas about male dominance were in operation in the RCMP, where a culture of masculinity and rigidly defined notions of gender and police authority were intertwined and tenaciously adhered to. Police authority was defined in the 1970s as the ability to deliver lethal force. But it was also understood in terms of mental discipline, physical toughness, aggression, and an imposing and strong body, all of which were seen as essential requirements for policing. Accordingly, as Steve Hewitt asserts, the masculine value of physicality often led to the use of force and violence in policing situations for the RCMP.¹ Police authority and its interconnectedness with masculinity, force, and violence undergirded the organizational and structural characteristics of the police force. Hierarchical rank structures, the chain of command, specialized skills training, and the RCMP's connection to national identity all coalesced to reinforce police authority as a masculine undertaking and the RCMP as a masculine institution.

¹ Hewitt, "The Masculine Mountie," 168.

The women of the RCMP worked to break through these gendered understandings once they began work at their first postings. Female Mounties contested, resisted, defied, and occasionally accepted definitions of police authority as inherently masculine. Some worked to meet male standards by adopting identities that reflected manly authority. Others relied on understandings of femininity during potentially violent encounters to effect a positive outcome. Some refused to back down and filed formal complaints; others resigned when they had reached their emotional and psychological limits. Most developed informal coping methods, particularly when dealing with harassment by male officers. Whatever their approach, the oral histories reveal that all female Mounties were cognizant of the gendered attitudes that undermined connections between women and police authority. Although the narrators in this study did not articulate the barriers they faced in terms of socially constructed understandings of gender, they did recognize that male RCMP officers were looking for reasons to justify the belief that women were incapable of doing a man's job. This chapter argues that these understandings of police authority both officially and informally defined police culture, where male police identities were articulated and reproduced as the only acceptable standard for the occupation. As a result, the successful integration of women as equal members of the police force was seriously curtailed.

Finally, a word about the oral histories of female police officers who participated in this research is helpful in clarifying the intent and substance of this section. In the pages and chapters that follow, a history of women in the RCMP emerges that is complex, sometimes contradictory, and frequently negative. The overwhelming memory of almost all of the female narrators who were interviewed for this research is one of challenge and embattlement during their careers. By focusing on their negative experiences during the research interview, they were endeavouring to come to terms with their past while gaining a sense of empowerment as historical actors in the present. Their feelings of embattlement are significant since they tell us how they have understood and continue to understand their experiences during the period under study, as well as their perceptions of the impact they had on the RCMP, police authority, and police culture. Of course, not all women in the RCMP were treated the same way, and not all men in the RCMP harassed female police officers or treated them with animosity or disdain. Nevertheless, the dominant feeling of embattlement must be respected and is an important feature of this analysis, one that helps to explain how gender and power

not only informed notions of police authority, but were at the root of women's difficult journey toward their full integration as members of the RCMP.

Mountie Wives and the Arrival of Women in the RCMP

One part of that difficult journey was the antagonistic response to female Mounties from the women who were married to the men of the RCMP. Mountie wives, or the "Unpaid Mountie" as they were often referred to by male Mounties, made significant contributions to the RCMP throughout the twentieth century by providing unpaid or poorly paid labour for the police force. Their voluntary labour enabled the RCMP to police vast geographical spaces for the cost of a single police officer's salary. For decades the work of the unpaid Mountie was an unacknowledged but well-known part of the RCMP's policing activities.² Since the living quarters of RCMP officers were often attached to the police office, particularly in one- or two-man rural postings, there was an expectation on the part of the RCMP that wives would aid their husbands in the running and upkeep of the detachment. Their help was simply viewed as an extension of their work in the home and many wives cleaned cells, fed prisoners, housed and fed visiting court officials, manned the police radio, and answered the detachment telephone.

The RCMP embodied a specific form of gender relations that celebrated the nuclear family in which the wages of a male breadwinner supported dependents who were supervised by a wife who remained within the space of a home. The nuclear family was a measure of normality during the postwar period, and Mountie wives were elemental in upholding this standard throughout most of the twentieth century.³ In doing so, they occupied positions as the appropriately feminine counterpart to the masculine Mountie hero in their communities, a position that was threatened by the arrival of female Mounties. Many wives would come to view the arrival of women in the RCMP as disrupting the status quo, and their resistance to female Mounties demonstrated just how unpredictable gender relations could be.

² Wives were more frequently and openly acknowledged for their contributions by the men of the RCMP following the hiring of female Mounties in 1974. For example, see Sgt. B.F. Nowell, "Salute to the Wives," *RCMP Quarterly* 40:4 (October 1975): 23.

³ Veronica Strong-Boag, "Their Side of the Story': Women's Voice from Ontario Suburbs, 1945-60," *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995): 46-47; 50.

The detachment work of Mountie wives began to slowly change in the 1960s and 70s. Many wives obtained work outside the home and a growing number refused to perform policing-related services for the RCMP. As a result, their husbands were sometimes punished – in the form of a lack of promotional opportunities – for their wives' recalcitrance. This was the case for Mary Fairbanks, who worked as a nurse in several of her husband's postings in the 1970s. But with every transfer, she lost seniority. Finally, when her husband was posted to an isolated one-man detachment without a hospital, Fairbanks's career came to a halt. She refused to clean cells or answer the radio and telephone unless she was paid for the work. Fairbanks is certain that her refusal to meet expectations as a Mountie wife was recorded on her husband's personnel record, since he never achieved a rank higher than corporal.⁴ She was not overreacting; the activities of Mountie wives had long been linked to their husbands' performance evaluations and promotional opportunities.⁵ Fairbanks's resistance disrupted the image of manliness and heterosexual normativity associated with the male Mountie as the sole breadwinner of a nuclear family and head of the household.

Despite attempts by the RCMP to uphold conventional values through the regulation of the personal lives of its police officers and their spouses, a growing number of Mountie wives engaged in paid labour outside the home in the final decades of the twentieth century. Indeed, all three of the Mountie wives who were interviewed for this study worked outside the home on a full-time basis in the 1970s and 80s.⁶ These narrators were not opposed to women in the RCMP, suggesting that their own participation in the paid workforce contributed to a greater acceptance of women working in male-dominated occupations. Indeed, none of these narrators recalled experiencing anxiety over the fact that female Mounties were working with their husbands.

⁴ Mary Fairbanks, interview with author, 15 May 2008.

⁵ Commanding officers routinely inspected living quarters and detachment offices, particularly in rural areas, until the 1960s. Their reports became part of a husband's service record, linking his career advancement to the domestic performance of his wife. In this respect, the RCMP colonized domestic space through these inspections. See Ruth Lee-Knight, *When the Second Man Was a Woman*, ed. Heather A. Punshon (Saskatoon, SK: Imagine Publishing, 2004), 119-20.

⁶ Mary Fairbanks, interview with author, 15 May 2008; Elizabeth Atkinson, interview with author, 14 May 2008; Patrice Smallwood, interview with author, 9 September 2008.

Their acceptance appears to have been an anomaly, however. Several female Mounties revealed in their interviews that they encountered wives who did not want their husbands working with female police officers because they feared that a woman would be unable to back up their husbands in dangerous situations, suggesting that they shared their husbands' perceptions that the physical limitations of female police officers would unnecessarily expose their men to danger. The overriding concern, however, had more to do with the threat of competition for the time and affections of their Mountie hero. Rumours about female Mounties were circulating between detachments even before the women left the training academy, something that the women of Troop 17 were cognizant of.⁷ Gossip had it that there was "hanky panky between some of the women recruits and the NCO instructors" at Depot, where female recruits were also "accused of having sex with their male counterparts in the residences, in police cruisers, even in the graveyard."⁸

Given the amount of time that male and female Mounties were to spend together during the course of a shift, it became important to the RCMP to reassure Mountie wives that female police officers were not rivals for their husbands' time or affections. Accordingly, Commr. Maurice Nadon, in his speech to Troop 17 at the graduation ceremonies, made a rare public acknowledgment of Mountie wives and their unofficial work for the RCMP: "Wives of members stationed on detachments were in many cases unofficial, unpaid and all-too-often unrecognized – but always appreciated members of the Force."⁹ Nadon's reference to wives as "members" of the police force may have been inadvertent, and it is possible that he intended to say appreciated "by" members of the police force. But it is unlikely that many would have contested this characterization, given the number of decades that the RCMP relied on the work of Mountie wives. In a similar vein, the *RCMP Gazette*, in its extensive coverage of the graduation of Troop 17 in 1975, also included an article that paid tribute to Mountie wives: "Little did they know when they pledged their marriage vows, that they were taking on an unknown partner – namely the Force. This often left them in the position of being the third party, or odd-

⁷ Colleen Slater-Smith, "Troop 17 Graduates"; Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 67.

⁸ Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 109. Depot's cemetery first came into use in 1884. It is located adjacent to the training academy's grounds and is still in use today. See Sheehan and Oosten, *Behind the Badge*, 196-99.

⁹ "Nadon Speech, 1975."

woman out!”¹⁰ Despite these accolades, some RCMP wives were clearly feeling the odd-woman-out, now that female Mounties were about to begin partnering with their husbands at work.

It was not long before the women of Troop 17, and those who followed, learned that the rumored antagonism of Mountie wives was not unfounded. When Trish O’Brien, a member of Troop 17, was asked about her reception at her first posting in the Maritimes, her initial recollection was of the wives at the detachment:

I think the most animosity was from the members’ wives. They were very, uh, reluctant to have us on board. And like anything I guess we like probably might’ve, in their minds, been a bit of threat to their marriage, you know? They didn’t want us working with [their husbands] in the car, and all this was going on without me even knowing. No one said anything about it. And once I got in there and I got to know the people, um, then you started hearing stuff . . . how all the wives got up in arms when they found out the female’s coming here, no one wanted you. [And one male member told me], “My wife said if you work with me, our marriage is over.”¹¹

Marianne Robson, also a member of Troop 17, described the resistance of the wives in this way:

I think one of the bigger issues was inside [the police] community as far as the wives of members [was concerned]. That was a huge, huge issue in the force . . . and I don’t know if women really believed that, you know, that female members were going to come and steal their husbands away, or whatever. But there’s that real sense that women were going to threaten relationships and marriages and break up families. And it did happen. It did happen, there’s no doubt about that. . . . [B]ut not all of us were [interested in their husbands]. We were there to do a job and my intent was not to break up anybody’s marriage or steal somebody’s husband by any means. But that was a real concern.¹²

Linda Rutherford recollected that the wives at her first posting in rural Manitoba were asked in advance by commanding officers what they thought of a female police officer working with their husbands. Her trainer’s wife had “absolutely no problem” with him

¹⁰ Nowell, “Salute to Our Wives,” 23.

¹¹ Trish O’Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

¹² Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

training a woman, suggesting that his wife had been consulted before his assignment.¹³

Allison Palmer recalled that the wives at her first posting ignored her outright:

They initially weren't going to have anything to do with me. . . . It was my trainer's wife [who defended me] and she was the one who finally went to a "stitch and bitch" and [said], "If anyone should be jealous it should be me. She's working with my husband." . . . It was [she] that made them finally wake up. And the one wife, it dawned on her . . . she phoned me [later] and we're still friends to this day.¹⁴

Janet Porter also remembered that the wife of her male trainer was interviewed prior to her arrival and that "everyone had to be on board" with her husband's training a female police officer. While Porter found that the wives were nice to her, they did not ask her to dinner, to go shopping, or to otherwise join them in socializing.¹⁵

This tension continued to haunt the women who followed Troop 17. Margaret Watson, who graduated in 1977, realized early in her policing career that the wives of male Mounties were concerned about female police officers "coming on" to their husbands. "They were not happy," recalled Watson, who said that female Mounties had to prove themselves to the wives too. At her first detachment, "contact parties" were held with the wives so they could get to know her. The wives' concerns over her presence only diminished, however, once she began to date a single constable her own age.¹⁶ When Kate Morton was posted to a small detachment in eastern Canada, she similarly found that while most of her male colleagues were respectful of her their wives were less trusting. She recalled that whenever the detachment had summer ride-along programs for law students, her male peers preferred that she take female law students as her ride-along partner so they would not "get in trouble" with their wives.¹⁷ Mountie wives at this detachment were clearly suspicious of any woman who rode with their husbands, and the men made a point of avoiding contact with other women during working hours to appease their wives.

¹³ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

¹⁴ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

¹⁵ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

¹⁶ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹⁷ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

Although Cherise Marchand had a good relationship with her male trainer and his wife at her first detachment, they abruptly ceased all social interaction with her after she completed her Recruit Field Training (RFT) program.¹⁸ Marchand recalled that both had treated her very well during her training, inviting her to social functions or to their home at Christmas, for example. But as soon as her training was over, her trainer “didn’t want to have anything to do with me.” Marchand, who was surprised by this turn of events, speculated that his wife had influenced his behaviour and that, once their social responsibilities and working requirements as the trainer and the trainer’s wife had been met, a continuing relationship with her was seen as unnecessary by the couple.¹⁹ While differences in rank may have brought about this circumstance, in smaller postings such as Marchand’s where lower-ranking police officers generally socialized together, it was unlikely.

Similarly, when Carolyn Harper, along with other single female Mounties attended a detachment social function, the wives would not speak to them:

There was a certain amount of jealousy there. I actually blame a lot of the men for that because the culture is such that they really didn’t take their jobs home with them. They really didn’t talk to their wives about their work. Having somebody there that they knew their husband was talking to was probably more upsetting to them. I don’t think they always looked to us as sexual rivals. I think they looked at us as rivals for their husbands’ time. I think that it really hurt them that they knew that their husbands were talking to us about things that their husbands wouldn’t talk to them about at home. A number of female members never went to social functions where wives were present for that reason. If you were single with a date, you were accepted. But if you were there singly or with two or three other women, they were so uncomfortable because of the wives.²⁰

Some male Mounties handled the arrival of female constables better than others by introducing their wives to the women right away. Carol Franklin found that the wives at

¹⁸ All new recruits, once posted to the field, underwent a Recruit Field Training Program (RFT) for six months. Each recruit was assigned a “trainer” or a “coach,” usually a more senior officer at the detachment who supervised and trained them in operational police duties. The trainer and the recruit worked through a training manual and usually rode together as a team every shift. In general, each recruit was required to complete the manual prior to their first annual performance evaluation. The completed program resulted in a pay increase for the recruit. Thank you to S/Sgt. Margaret Shorter for this information.

¹⁹ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

²⁰ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

her first posting very accepting and inclusive. Franklin still “writes Christmas cards to one of the member’s wives that befriended me. I feel so fortunate to have been in that place.”²¹ The wives at Louise Ferguson’s first detachment were also supportive, once they had met her. “I mean, you got invited to everybody’s place for supper. First of all, the guys wanted their wives to meet me so that tension was settled down. I got lots of dinner invitations right off the bat. We all socialized together. That was my social circle.”²² Thus, at least some male Mounties recognized that it was important to defuse quickly the tensions created in Mountie marriages by the appearance of female police officers. Mountie wives played a significant role in either creating or reducing stressors that both male and female police officers encountered as members of the RCMP.

Women married to RCMP officers were not alone in their trepidation over female police officers; it was a familiar response from the wives of many police officers across North America. For example, the wives of police officers in Newton, Massachusetts, resisted the entrance of women, citing “as one reason the sexual potential of long shifts shared by men and women in patrol cars.”²³ Male officers used the angst of their wives to justify the exclusion of women from that particular police force. Female police officers in Seattle also faced considerable resistance from wives who did not want their husbands working alone with female partners. Some feared that their husbands’ lives would be endangered by a lack of male back-up. Leslie Baranzini’s male partner was required to telephone his wife at a specific time during a shift to let her know that he was safe. But the sexuality of the women officers was also seen as a threat. Baranzini made the effort to introduce herself to as many wives as possible in an effort to reduce the element of the unknown, and to reassure them that she did not plan to take their husbands away from them.²⁴

The wives of municipal police officers in Canada voiced similar concerns about the hiring of women as constables. Carolyn Harper’s application to a municipal police

²¹ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

²² Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

²³ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1977), 107. Thank you to Kate Braid for this reference.

²⁴ Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue*, 76. For the acrimonious relationship between female police officers and officers’ wives in New York City in 1975 see Judy Klemesrud, “Laid-Off Women Police Officers Decide to Fight for Their Jobs,” *New York Times*, 12 August 1975.

department in British Columbia was initially rejected in 1974. When she contacted the recruiter to ask for the reason, she was told the department was being careful in their selection of its first female constable because of resistance from the wives. According to Harper, "They were being very careful in their selection because this was the first [female constable] they were hiring . . . and when they announced they were doing it they had already got so many complaints from wives. And so they said, 'We [a]re really treading carefully here'."²⁵ Harper, who was single and twenty-one years old at the time, remembered that the wives were especially concerned about their husbands riding around all night with a young woman in the police cruiser. "They were so frightened about what was gonna happen; obviously they didn't trust their husbands," speculated Harper.²⁶ That particular police department eventually hired a divorced woman in her thirties with two children. Harper successfully applied to the RCMP instead. In the Canadian armed forces, a questionnaire was distributed to 4,314 military personnel in 1978 to assess how women would be received serving as soldiers, sailors, and aircrew. The results of the survey indicated that while armed forces personnel were willing to see women serving at sea, a majority were against women serving in submarines or fighting as soldiers.²⁷ It is interesting to note that the questionnaire was also distributed to the wives of military personnel, suggesting that the opinions of the spouses were considered an important part of the decision-making process to commanding officers.

Researchers were also concerned about the family life and personal relationships of police officers. Psychological studies had found that a lack of family support resulted in higher levels of stress and burnout for police officers.²⁸ In 1982, researchers Rick Linden and Candice Minch, sociologists from the University of Manitoba, conducted extensive research into women in policing in North America, including the RCMP. Their discussion of family problems among police officers included the reasons for high rates of divorce. They pointed to the strains placed on marriages by shift work, long hours, and social isolation within communities. As well, the "entry into the department of fairly large numbers of women who may be sharing a car eight hours a

²⁵ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

²⁶ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

²⁷ Winslow and Dunn, "Women in the Canadian Forces," 646.

²⁸ Don L. Kurtz, "Controlled Burn: The Gendering of Stress and Burnout in Modern Policing," *Feminist Criminology* 3:216 (2008): 229-30.

day with their husbands is seen by the wives as an additional threat to their marriage.”²⁹ Researcher A.O. Maguire, in an undated study on the RCMP, found that Mountie wives grew concerned every time they discovered that a new female police officer was arriving at the detachment. Paraphrasing Maguire’s findings, Linden and Minch wrote,

[T]here was a great deal of concern over the prospect of a female constable arriving on the detachment. In one case, the fears of the wives are alleviated when the new constable turned out to be a “plain Jane” and was not perceived as a threat. Similarly, the wives became more accepting of female officers after they began to go out with single males on the detachment. Again, this meant that they were less of a threat.³⁰

The RCMP’s own research identified several issues experienced by female Mounties as they attempted to socialize and integrate into their communities, including negativity from wives.³¹ Despite their misgivings, in 1975 the wives of RCMP officers finally joined the thousands of other police wives across North America whose husbands were already working with female police officers.³²

Wives’ view of female police officers as competition for their husbands’ time and affections was an additional burden on marriages already stretched by long hours, social isolation, poor pay, and multiple transfers. As a result, many spouses employed formal and informal methods of resistance to exclude women as police officers, contributing to a difficult and unwelcoming work and social environment for the women of the RCMP. Not all Mountie wives responded to the presence of female police officers in negative ways; indeed, the oral histories also reveal that some wives welcomed and befriended the women. But like the wives of men in many male-dominated professions that were admitting growing numbers of women in the 1970s, the unpaid Mountie relied on

²⁹ Rick Linden and Candice Minch, *Women in Policing: A Review* (Winnipeg: Institute for Social and Economic Research, University of Manitoba, 1982), 104.

³⁰ A.O. Maguire, “Laughing on the Outside – Crying on the Inside: A Renewed Examination of the Female Regular Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police,” quoted in Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 105.

³¹ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 145; 161.

³² In Canada in 1975, there were 47,151 male police officers (or 98.8 percent of total police forces) and 562 female police officers (or 1.2 percent). “Table 4: Police Officers by Sex, Canada, Selected Years,” Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Police Administration Survey, *Statistics Canada*, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-225-x/2010000/t005-eng.html> [accessed 11 May 2011].

conventional concepts of femininity and masculinity when resisting the idea of women working closely with their husbands. Their response to female Mounties demonstrates that women were not a homogenous, unified group but, like men, were often fragmented when it came to beliefs and opinions regarding shifting gender relations.

The Canadian Public and Female Bodies of Authority

Tensions with Mountie wives were just one concern for the first women in the RCMP who were anxious to discover how the general public would respond to them as figures of civic authority. Canadians responded to the arrival of female Mounties in a variety of ways. Residents in communities policed by the RCMP, unlike their urban counterparts who were occasionally encountering female municipal officers, had never seen a female police officer before. The residents in Louise Ferguson's first community felt gratified: "[They] knew, well, that I was [one of the first women], you know, and they felt kind of special that they got one of the first females. Everybody in the community was really pleasant. Very nice."³³ Janet Porter, posted to a small town in Alberta, remembered that the whole community knew she was coming and that heads turned whenever she drove through town in the police cruiser.³⁴ According to Allison Palmer, who was stationed on the prairies, members of the community were "pretty positive." She recalled that one night she stopped for a coffee with some of her male colleagues. "Mine was paid for; the guys' wasn't. Somebody [in the coffee shop] had never seen a female member before and paid for my coffee."³⁵

After a while, however, so much attention was like living in a fish bowl, particularly for those posted to small towns or rural areas. Linda Rutherford found the attention difficult at times: "It was hard. You'd stop the police car at an intersection, and people would be walking by and they'd be pointing. I had no privacy. You couldn't go anywhere. Everybody knew who I was and they'd be pointing. . . . I remember so

³³ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006. According to one RCMP study conducted three years later, many communities felt privileged to receive the first female Mounties and readily accepted them as police officers, although there were a few skeptics. Sgt. D.R. Baird, *Policewomen in the R.C.M.P.* (14 October 1977): 6-7. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

³⁴ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

³⁵ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

distinctly people pointing. It was a novelty.”³⁶ At a mining town in western Canada, Marianne Robson recalled, “I was just stared at no matter where I went. I was in uniform. Stared at all the time. People would just, I guess it was just so unusual, so unique, that people wanted to see what it was all about. . . . Even in, um, you know, once you got off duty . . . once people got to know who you were, people always watched you.”³⁷ The constant attention enabled the many to see the few, creating, as criminologist Thomas Mathiesen argues, a synopticon, the opposite process to Foucault’s panopticon whereby the few observe the many.³⁸ It appeared to be a common occurrence for women working for municipal police forces, too. Teri MacMillan, who worked for the Seattle police department in 1976, recalled being stared at constantly. “You felt like you always had to sit somewhere where people couldn’t watch you eat because they were just aghast that there was this female in uniform and heaven forbid they should watch you drool or something.”³⁹ Although Seattle was a sizable city, female police officers were still few in number and therefore a novelty in some urban centres. Their presence sometimes caught the members of the general public off-guard.

The rarity of female Mounties’ working in rural areas and small towns contributed to their social isolation. Research conducted in 1982 by Linden and Minch found rural policing posed particular challenges for the women of the RCMP:

Being a police officer in a small town creates problems regarding off-duty socialization – the officer is well-known to all members of the community and cannot ever escape the pressures of the police role. This problem may be particularly acute for females who have no friends or working associates in remote areas. . . . This situation can create problems in terms of morale and retention of the female member in the Force.⁴⁰

This was true for Donna Burns who discovered that, in addition to social isolation, the lack of privacy posed safety concerns. Burns recalled that groups of young men at her first posting, who were well-known to the local police, attempted on several occasions to

³⁶ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

³⁷ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

³⁸ Thomas Mathiesen, quoted in Rob C. Mawby, *Policing Images: Policing, Communication and Legitimacy* (Portland, OR: Willan Publishing, 2002), 37.

³⁹ Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue*, 77-78.

⁴⁰ Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 112.

intimidate and frighten her. Because it was a small town, they knew where she lived. They sat outside her apartment in their vehicles late at night, put sugar in her gas tank, and followed her around while she was patrolling. Burns commented, "There were numerous times when the groups would be following me while out on patrol and just trying to set me up" in potentially harmful situations.⁴¹ However, she stood her ground and refused to be intimidated. Burns always felt supported by the male police officers she worked with, many of whom she referred to as "gentlemen" who did not hesitate to back her up in dangerous situations. Their support afforded her a level of personal security that contributed to her growing confidence as a rookie police officer.

It took some time for the public to accept female Mounties as legitimate figures of authority. Many of the women interviewed for this study recalled incidents when members of the community requested help from a male police officer rather than a female police officer. Denise Bell, who was stationed in a small town in the prairies in 1978, answered the detachment telephone on one occasion when a member from the community asked to speak with a male police officer instead. Bell assured the caller that she was capable of helping with the query, despite a reluctance on the part of the caller to speak with her.⁴² Trish O'Brien's community in the Maritimes had never seen a female Mountie before she arrived. She recalled that, initially, members of the public assumed that she was married to her male partner when they were spotted out on patrol together. O'Brien also found that people from the community would invariably prefer to speak to the male officer during calls or would ask to speak to a man when they came to the detachment.⁴³ These accounts illustrate how the public initially lacked the confidence in a woman's authority or her ability to do what was still considered to be a man's job.

Janice Murdoch recalled that some in her first community thought she was not old enough to drive a vehicle, let alone enforce the law. Murdoch's ponytail and braces made her look younger than her twenty-one years. After a while, Murdoch noticed that if she was riding with a male auxiliary police officer, people would approach him first at a crime scene or during a call, making it necessary for her to step in and tell them that she

⁴¹ Donna Burns Morse, interview with author, 20 April 2010; also in Bonnie Reilly Schmidt, "Women on the Force," *Canada's History* (August-September 2011): 34-41.

⁴² Denise Bell, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁴³ Trish O'Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

was the police officer. Murdoch's husband, who was not a police officer, occasionally rode along with her as a volunteer during her shifts. On at least two occasions, witnesses turned to him for assistance instead of Murdoch, even though he was not wearing a police uniform. Although Murdoch had nine years of service as a police officer at the time, she found that members of the public still preferred to speak with a man rather than a female police officer.⁴⁴ Perceptions of police authority as a masculine jurisdiction were reflected in the public's reluctance to trust a woman to provide adequate law enforcement or crime prevention help.

The sight of a young woman in a uniform sometimes confused members of the public. Jane Hall, who looked like a teenager even though she was twenty-three years old at the time, recalled responding to a routine call in North Vancouver, British Columbia. When she knocked on the door of a home, a "well-dressed woman in her mid-seventies" answered, and "called to her husband, sitting on the couch behind her, 'Dear, the Girl Guides are here!'"⁴⁵ Cherise Marchand, the first woman to be posted to a detachment in a small city in a western province, recalled that she "just about caused a few accidents" when members of the public "did a double-take" after seeing her on the street for the first time.⁴⁶ Allison Palmer's presence almost caused traffic accidents too. Palmer remembered "being at the scene of an accident [when] the guys had me get in the car and leave." Several passing motorists were so distracted by the sight of a female Mountie on the road that they almost caused another accident trying to get a second look at her.⁴⁷

Despite the sometimes humorous encounters that early female Mounties experienced, it was not long before they had to confront violence. Like the men of the RCMP, some male constituents also viewed physicality as a symbol of manliness. These men actively negotiated their masculine identity through the use of violence in their dealings with the women of the RCMP, which they viewed as a means of obtaining prestige in the community. Many resisted the authority of female police officers by physically attacking them. Denise Bell recounted an incident in which a man tackled her

⁴⁴ Janice Murdoch, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

⁴⁵ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 73.

⁴⁶ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

⁴⁷ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

in a restaurant and tried to “put me through a wall.” Immediately, “before my feet even hit the ground someone grabbed the man and said, ‘Don’t you ever hit a woman!’” Bell then had to break the two men up because they entered into a fistfight over the incident.⁴⁸ The witness acted in a paternalistic, protective way by engaging in an altercation with the suspect. This incident is particularly useful in illustrating the contradictory responses that the presence of women in the RCMP engendered in the 1970s.

Shelley Evans also experienced high levels of violence from men. She recollected that she seemed to be doing an inordinate amount of fighting at her first posting in Alberta in 1988, which she characterized as a “rough” community that included transient men working in the oil industry and university students. Evans, who was just twenty-one years old at the time, remembered that there were “always people kind of surprised to see you, there [were] people that had no problem with you whatsoever,” and then there were others that had a real problem with a “girl with a gun.” For Evans, gender was a factor in many of her dealings with the public. She recounted responding to a call about a bar fight one night, only to find that the bouncer resented her presence:

In front of an entire bar full of people, [I] was slapped by a male bouncer. He felt I was interfering with his job. . . . The next thing he knew he was picking himself up off the floor and he had a broken nose ‘cause I laid him out. And another friend of mine was a bouncer there, and he was coming to aid me and [he realized] “Oh, she doesn’t need any help!” [The bouncer I punched] was whining and crying later that I broke his nose.⁴⁹

Whether or not the bouncer would have considered slapping a male police officer in the face is speculative. However, he clearly equated police authority, and his own, with masculinity and physical force. Evans, who thought it was important that she establish her authority as a police officer in the community, was as unwilling to be humiliated in front of the bar’s patrons as the bouncer was. On another occasion, outside the same bar, Evans was attacked by a university student whom she was attempting to arrest for impaired driving. According to Evans,

⁴⁸ Denise Bell, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁴⁹ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

He was so scared at the thought of losing everything and being impaired and going to jail that he'd much rather strangle me on the side of the road. If I had been able to get to my gun [during the altercation], I probably would have shot him. But I couldn't, and I was, luckily, physically able to contain him until the backup troops could arrive. . . . He broke my hand really badly and I was in surgery later that morning . . . and ended up in the hospital for a few days. But I'm lucky I had size behind me.⁵⁰

In both of these cases, Evans exercised her agency by adopting masculine standards that included the use of violence, illustrating the performative and fluid nature of gender. The bar became a contested space where perceptions of police authority as inherently masculine were undermined by Evans's physical confrontations with men who refused to accept her as a figure of authority.

The willingness of some of the female narrators to respond in a physical way to resistance to their authority was often expressed in terms of satisfaction during the interview process. For example, an impaired driver attempting to escape arrest by Louise Ferguson was surprised by her ability to physically restrain and arrest him:

One impaired driver, I got into a big fight with him and by the time I got him into the office and called in the breathalyzer operator, there'd been a fight. . . . I was a pretty good scrapper at the time. . . . The guy was standing in the office. The breathalyzer operator had called in. . . . [The suspect] said, "Thank God you're here! She already tried to kill me once!" He was that drunk. He was a little beat-up looking.⁵¹

And when Pam Osborne's authority was challenged by an older man in her community, she responded to his gendered attitude with physical force:

I fought with this German farmer one night, a grandfather, because I think I was a female. Heaven forbid that I should tell him, being a woman, directing him and curtailing his activities. . . . We [the RCMP] were involved in an incident on the block and he came up to it and I told him to

⁵⁰ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008. The suspect was charged with impaired driving, resisting arrest, and assault. He received one year of probation. Evans was in the hospital for three days and was off duty for a few weeks. When she returned to work, she was placed on light duties for eight weeks before resuming full police duties. She underwent a second surgery to remove the pins in her hand after they became infected. Evans suffered permanent nerve damage to her hand, which is now arthritic. Shelly Evans, email communication to author, 29 August 2008.

⁵¹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

get out of the way and continue on. He refused. It was a definite “I don’t have to listen to you, you’re just a girl.” So fine, you’re going to obstruct me, I’m going to take you to jail. . . . We ended up in a fight [and I had] to arrest him and [take] him to jail.⁵²

The farmer’s response to Osborne was informed by a gendered belief that a woman did not have the authority to direct the activities of men in public spaces. Osborne’s physical response to his resistance and her assertion of her authority as a law enforcement officer was a renegotiation of that space. The ability of Evans, Ferguson, and Osborne to use physical force to subdue suspects and make arrests suggests that some female Mounties embraced traditional definitions of police authority and used violence when necessary. For these women, their ability to use their bodies to effectively enforce the law resulted in a sense of accomplishment.

Other female RCMP officers also did not hesitate to use their bodies. Journalist and author Robert Knuckle described the first female Mountie to be posted to Virden, Manitoba in 1975. Debbie MacLean was twenty-four years old, “pretty and refined in her manners” but a “big woman at 5’9” and 190 lbs. who had a strong honest way about her.” Knuckle recounted one incident that demonstrated the physical strength MacLean possessed. After placing a drunk and verbally abusive male into the cells at the detachment, the prisoner asked MacLean to come closer to the bars so he could tell her something important. As she got closer, the prisoner reached between the bars and punched her in the face, causing her nose to bleed. MacLean opened the cell door and “hit the drunk between the eyes. He flew backwards against the wall and slowly slid down into a sitting position on the floor. Then she walked out of the cell . . . and went upstairs to finish her paperwork.”⁵³ This story illustrates how male members of the public responded to female Mounties in a variety of gendered ways. Many Canadian men, like their Mountie counterparts, equated physicality with masculine authority and they often exercised their manliness with violence. Clearly, some men were not averse to expressing their anger against being placed under arrest by a female police officer in physical ways.

⁵² Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

⁵³ Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 68. Descriptions about MacLean’s large body were counterbalanced by Knuckle’s reference to her refined manners, an approach that suggested she remained feminine despite her physical size.

The incident also reveals that female Mounties were capable of meeting male policing standards by responding to violence with the use of force. While Knuckle used this story to illustrate that some female Mounties were more than capable of handling themselves with combative males in the 1970s, the issue of the use of force is more complex than his telling conveys. By today's standards, MacLean's response may be considered excessive, given that the man was incarcerated and inebriated. However, his assault on MacLean required her to answer his aggression with force in order to establish boundaries with the prisoner and reinforce her authority as a police officer. This was an important factor, given that it was entirely probable that MacLean may have had future dealings with this man after his release back into the community, given its small size. It was a fine line that police officers were required to balance as they made split-second decisions during violent confrontations. Although most female Mounties tended to use negotiation rather than physical confrontation in their dealings with the public, at times they relied on their physical training to defend themselves and re-establish their authority as police officers.

Similarly, Donna Burns relied on her RCMP training and her adrenaline to see her through her first life threatening altercation, which took place just one week after her arrival in Port Alberni, British Columbia. While attempting to question a suspect in a local restaurant, Burns touched the man lightly on the shoulder and asked him to step outside:

[As] soon as I touched him, he went berserk. He got up, the table flew, he pushed me back over the counter and he starts choking me. And he's choking and nobody's coming to help me, of course. . . . But it was that Depot training, the ground fighting. [My hand] came up behind him, and like I said, he had that long blond hair and I just yanked it. And I got him off me and he's just going. And I don't remember how I got him from the fish and chip place to the car. But I remember . . . I couldn't get cuffs on him. . . . I've got him in the back seat of the car, and he's just going wild. . . . It was one of those things, it was the training. And it was my adrenaline . . . But I'll never forget that he had his hands [on my neck] and I had bruises on my throat and he was choking me.⁵⁴

Burns recalled that she was so new to police work that she did not know how to turn on the police cruiser's siren as she made her way back to the detachment with the violent

⁵⁴ Donna Burns Morse, interview with author, 20 April 2010. This incident is also recounted in Reilly Schmidt, "Women on the Force," 39.

suspect. Her reliance on her training to subdue her assailant illustrates how police performance is developed and constructed; it does not come “naturally” but evolves through a series of bodily acts that are repeated over and over again.⁵⁵ Although Burns lacked the physical size and strength that most male officers possessed, she successfully blurred the gendered lines that characterized her as the weaker sex through her self-defense training at Depot.

More importantly, the incident was invested with symbolic meaning for both Burns’s colleagues and the public. When Burns returned to the detachment and her male colleagues saw who she had in the back of the police cruiser, she garnered their immediate respect. The suspect, who by this time was trying to kick out the windows in the back of the police cruiser, was well known to RCMP officers at the Port Alberni detachment. “I couldn’t do anything wrong” after that incident, according to Burns, who knew that she needed to communicate to her male peers that she was not easily intimidated or afraid to defend herself. And if members of the community who were watching the altercation had any questions about the ability of women to handle violent confrontations, their concerns were answered. It is likely that none of the restaurant’s patrons came to her aid because they were also afraid of the suspect. But the physical fight between a man and a woman was an unusual event that not only challenged conventional understandings of femininity and masculinity but offered an alternative viewpoint of civic authority in a rather dramatic way. The media eventually caught wind of the story about the assault on Port Alberni’s first female Mountie and published an account of it in the local newspaper, alerting the community to her capabilities as a law enforcement officer. Burns thought it was very fortunate that the incident happened so early on in her career since it gave her a lot of credibility, both with her peers and with members of the community.⁵⁶

Louise Ferguson also gained credibility as a rookie police officer during an altercation with an intoxicated man:

I got there and it was no big deal. It was a guy. . . . He was fighting with some other people. He was intoxicated. I got there; I was right out of training. The guy was quite combative, you know, pushing people and

⁵⁵ Woodward and Winter, *Sexing the Soldier*, 72; also Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 9.

⁵⁶ Donna Burns Morse, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

fighting. I just clicked into training mode, and of course at that time I was strong and still jogging every day. I got him in a choke hold and by the time the other member got there, I was just putting the cuffs on him and putting him in the car. . . . It was so easy, like it was really quite easy. But the next day it was all around . . . that I'd been in this big fight and single-handedly took down this big huge logger guy. I mean, it wasn't even close to the truth.⁵⁷

Not only did word about the altercation spread in her community, but neighbouring communities and detachments heard about it as well, suggesting the extent to which the physical capabilities of the female police body were both celebrated and under scrutiny. Ferguson had the sense that it would help her credibility and, accordingly, she did not dispute the rumours about her encounter with the big logger. She considered her altercation with the intoxicated man to be a fortuitous incident that helped to establish her reputation as an effective and authoritative police officer in town. These stories suggest that some male constituents in the community, as well as police officers, understood that the threat of the use of force was definitive of police authority. Burns and Ferguson were cognizant of the importance of replicating this standard, since it was considered normative for effective policing and was viewed as a measure of competency.⁵⁸

Some male civilians occasionally came to the aid of female police officers when a difference in physical size made it difficult to make an arrest. One day, Cherise Marchand's trainer decided to let her answer a call to pick up a man who was drunk and passed out. Unbeknownst to Marchand, her trainer had already surmised who the man was, based on the location of the call. According to Marchand:

[T]his fellow was a native and he had to be at least six foot three, well over 200 pounds. . . . So I get the call and I see this guy, and um, I'm pulling him up the driveway towards the sidewalk to get him in the car. This fellow stopped, an older fellow, and asked me if I needed a hand. And I thought, well, I'm not sure what I'm supposed to answer here. So he said, "Oh, I'll give you a hand." So he helped me out and put this guy in the car. And I drive back to the detachment and I . . . ask somebody inside . . . to help me get him in the drunk tank. And so my trainer comes

⁵⁷ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁵⁸ This was also true for women in the military, where the adoption of male values were related to competency. See Rosemarie Skaine, *Women at War: Gender Issues of Americans in Combat* (North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 1999), 76.

in to see how things have gone, and he helps me get him to the cell block. He looks at me and says, "How did you get him in the car?" I said, "Somebody helped me." And he says, "That's not fair! I've been in the RCMP for six years and nobody's ever given me a hand for anything. This is the first time you go out by yourself, and you get somebody to help you put this drunk in your car?" I said, "Yeah."⁵⁹

Marchand believed that her trainer had set her up for failure; indeed, she too had wondered how she was going to arrest the intoxicated man when she saw his size. However, neither Marchand nor her trainer anticipated that gentlemanly codes of conduct toward a woman ensured the cooperation of some of the men in the community. In this instance, gendered notions about women as the weaker sex in need of masculine help had stymied the efforts of a male Mountie intent on critiquing, in a very public way, the inadequacy of the female police body to perform what was considered a routine police task. Marchand was aware of her physical limitations and did not dissuade the man from helping her. The trainer's surprise at Marchand's success with this particular individual was tinged with a certain amount of professional jealousy. As one researcher from the period explained, male police officers feared that women will use "something men cannot use to gain favor, thus changing the rules of competition." They were also fearful of being outdone by a woman who played by the rules.⁶⁰

The prospect of being bested in a fight with a female Mountie was often reason enough for some men to think twice about resisting arrest. After Marianne Robson had arrested a male suspect at a local inn, he escaped from the back of the police cruiser. Robson chased him and caught him. The next day, word about their altercation spread in the community, including the fact that the suspect "got caught by the female Mountie." According to Robson, the man was so embarrassed about being chased and caught by a woman that he left town.⁶¹ Pam Osborne described her fighting experiences in a small town in Manitoba this way:

Actually, it was kind of fun when you'd go to a bar fight and you'd get going with the cowboys and they'd come out swinging and they'd see that you were a girl. And they'd say, "Oh, I'm so sorry." I guess chivalry, you

⁵⁹ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

⁶⁰ Susan E. Martin, "Sexual Politics in the Workplace: The Interactional World of Policewomen," *Symbolic Interaction* 1:2 (Spring 1978), 52.

⁶¹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

know. They'd never want to admit that you were the one to pull them off somebody or took them down in a fight because that would be very destructive to their egos.⁶²

Shelly Evans, as we saw in the story about her altercation with the bouncer, was capable of using physical force but did not resort to it all the time. According to Evans, she often talked her way out of potentially violent situations. Evans used the threat of public humiliation on more than one occasion with uncooperative men. She recalled, "I don't know how many times I told people 'Look, I am totally going to publicly humiliate you here in front of all your friends. I'm going to kick your ass.' And they'd look at me and with my size you could see them process it and think, 'Holy crap, she might be able to do it. So I'd better just kinda come along.' That worked for me countless times."⁶³ Evans's appeals to a combative male's understanding of masculinity served her well during tense confrontations. Cherise Marchand concurred. Marchand maintained that she never had problems making arrests during bar fights, mainly because of notions of appropriate masculine behaviour at the time: "They'd look at me and [think], 'Okay, that wouldn't look very manly [for me] to hit a woman.'"⁶⁴

Understandings about gender worked in other ways for female Mounties. Carolyn Harper, a special constable stationed at a major Canadian airport recalled that people actually thanked her when she wrote them a traffic ticket: "In 1975, they [would] thank you for writing a speeding ticket" because female Mounties were so novel. She recalled that they often told her "You're doing a very good job!"⁶⁵ These examples illustrate how recognition for their policing was often a double-edged sword for female police officers. Responses such as these revealed the operation of gendered and paternalistic attitudes toward female police officers during a time women were attempting to establish themselves as legitimate figures of authority. Harper, who felt that members of the public were responsive to her and respectful, never had a negative experience when dealing with the public. In her opinion, the fact that she was a female officer "contributed to a

⁶² Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

⁶³ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008. Also in Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue*, 79.

⁶⁴ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008. Also Hall, *The Red Wall*, 86.

⁶⁵ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

calmer situation,” even when handing out tickets.⁶⁶ Clearly, some female Mounties took advantage of the gendered and paternalistic attitudes to make their jobs easier, adding to the tensions that female police officers experienced from their male colleagues.

Jane Hall arrested an impaired driver in North Vancouver one night. After politely reading the breathalyzer demand to him and before he had time to think, she opened the back door of the police cruiser, slipped the handcuffs on him, and put him in the back seat.⁶⁷ Unbeknownst to Hall, her suspect was one of the city’s most notorious criminals and was under surveillance at the time by a member of the drug squad, who observed the entire arrest. The drug squad police officer later communicated a different version of events back at the detachment: “It was brutal. . . . She must be a black belt or something; he never got a chance to even touch her,” he recalled, marveling at how easily Hall got the suspect into the cruiser. Despite the fact that the suspect was highly intoxicated and cooperated with Hall, even calling her “Ma’am” at one point, she allowed this version of events to circulate freely. According to Hall, “It was too delicious a rumour to suppress; a small female police officer inflicting that kind of street justice on that calibre of criminal. The rumour spread like wildfire” around the detachment.⁶⁸

Some male suspects, unlike those discussed above, preferred to be arrested by a female Mountie, who sometimes had a calming effect on tense situations. Pam Osborne recounted, “One night I walked into a bar scene, I was the last member to get there, and the suspect was chest to chest and nose to nose with three male members around him, ready to go and fight. I walked in and he said, ‘Well, I’ll go with you.’ And we walked him out. No fight.”⁶⁹ According to the author of one study, women were able to reduce violent situations because they had less to prove in their encounters with hostile civilians. In contrast, male officers tended to believe that their masculinity was being

⁶⁶ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

⁶⁷ The breathalyzer demand is read to persons suspected of operating a motor vehicle while impaired. The demand requests that the suspect proceed to the detachment with the police officer to provide two breath samples to a qualified technician to determine the proportion of alcohol in their blood. Failure to comply with the breathalyzer demand is an indictable offense under the Canada’s *Criminal Code*, Section 235 (2).

⁶⁸ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 77-79.

⁶⁹ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

threatened in these situations, causing a tense situation to escalate into violence.⁷⁰ Accordingly, many male police officers chose to assert their masculine identity through the use of force, rejecting the alternative approaches used by those female Mounties who preferred to negotiate their way out of violent situations. An incident described by Louise Ferguson confirmed that having a female presence at a bar fight tended to calm a potentially violent situation down significantly:

Because there was less to prove from a male perspective, you know . . . you could see the guy thinking, "Number one, she's either got a black belt in karate and will beat the shit out of me and embarrass me in front of all my friends. Or, I will get the upper hand and all I've done is beaten up on some girl." If you're aware of that and play that you can defuse a lot of situations and offer someone the 'out' – they don't have to find out one way or the other. You say, "Let's go to my police car and talk about it." They'll race you there. They want to get the situation resolved. They don't want to find out, they don't want to lose. In some cases, most people don't really want to have their friends see them beat up this lady cop.⁷¹

All of the female Mounties interviewed for this research utilized gendered understandings of femininity and masculinity at some point in their careers, not only to diffuse violent situations but to negotiate with suspects.

Members of the public also used gendered approaches in an attempt to manoeuvre their way out of trouble. Shelly Evans recounted several examples of male members of the public who "often think they can get out of trouble by flirting with a female member. When [their advances] are not accepted the female is a bitch and must be gay," a reputation that subsequently circulated in the community.⁷² Conversely, female civilians relied on their femininity when dealing with male police officers, a tactic that did not work in their dealings with female Mounties, whom they assumed were heterosexual. According to Carolyn Harper, "They knew they couldn't get away with flirtatious behaviour like they would try with a male officer, to try to get away with things. They would use their sexuality with male officers. They knew that they lost the little bit of

⁷⁰ Steve Herbert, "'Hard Charger' or 'Station Queen': Policing and the Masculinist State," *Gender, Place & Culture: A Journal of Feminist Geography* 8:1 (2001): 60.

⁷¹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

⁷² Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008

an edge they thought they may have had when a female officer arrived” at a call.⁷³ Similarly, when Jane Hall responded to a bar fight, one of the female combatants was disappointed to see her. The drunk woman had already “grabbed one of the [male] constables from behind as he struggled to arrest the prisoner. The female obviously felt untouchable because she knew if a male police officer grabbed her, the drunk onlookers from the bar could use the excuse of coming to the rescue of a female as a catalyst for a potential bar brawl. How unfortunate for her [that] I was there, because the same social code that applied to her also applied to me.”⁷⁴ Hall restrained and arrested the woman.

Some male suspects assumed that they could outrun a woman and evade capture. Janice Murdoch found that men “might decide to fight or they might decide to run, but more often than not they will run, thinking I won’t catch them.”⁷⁵ Murdoch, a dog handler, recalled assisting in the apprehension of two men suspected of a violent assault. She tracked the suspects with her dog into an area of bush that was heavily wooded. Although she initially had backup officers aiding her in the search, they were soon left behind by Murdoch and her dog as she followed the suspects’ trail. Working alone without backup was not unusual for Murdoch, since even physically fit men found it difficult to track suspects for long periods of time without specialized training. Eventually, Murdoch located the two suspects and brought them out of the bush on her own. On the way back to the detachment, one of the male officers asked the suspects why they decided to run into the bush. They responded that when they saw the female police officer, they assumed that “she’s never going to catch us.” Laughing, the male officers informed the suspects that Murdoch had just returned from running the Boston Marathon, so the chances of their outrunning her were slim.⁷⁶ In these oral histories, the female police body functioned as it was trained to respond at Depot. Female Mounties were capable of living up to the normative masculine standard of physical prowess despite their smaller stature. But, as we will see, while many female Mounties attempted to renegotiate gendered understandings of women in policing, male Mounties worked hard to reproduce the masculine police culture.

⁷³ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

⁷⁴ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 86.

⁷⁵ Janice Murdoch, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

⁷⁶ Janice Murdoch, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

Female civilians also engaged in violence against female Mounties, disturbing conventional understandings of gender. Margaret Watson, who did not shy away from using physical force when necessary, found that women in her community were as dangerous as men at times. Watson cited domestic disputes as the type of incident in which women were more likely to be violent with police officers, male or female. But they were not the only calls in which she experienced violence from women. Watson also remembered arresting a mentally unstable woman who dragged her down a flight of stairs and ripped her shirt off before she could restrain her.⁷⁷ Women in the community were sometimes as violent with female Mounties as men, another indication of the fluidity and unpredictability of gender.

The above examples illustrate the complex nature of the public's response to female Mounties. The Canadian public generally understood equality as sameness, a factor borne out by the activities of those civilians who treated female Mounties in the same way they would male police officers. It is arguable whether a willingness to engage in violence with a member of the public was a measure of the women's equality, since not all men responded to female Mounties in the same way and not all women resorted to violence during altercations. We can say, however, that it was a measure of the fluidity of understandings of gender at the time. Although men were sometimes willing to strike a woman and women were sometimes willing to strike them back, we must consider that male members of the public, like the men in the RCMP, understood physicality and violence as manly characteristics. They also understood policing as masculine work in which the threat of force served as the definitive standard of police authority, even when they were on the receiving end of that force. These concepts were challenged when female Mounties met violence with violence, blurring gendered notions of the female body as an unlikely conduit of authority. Within the RCMP, responding to violence with violence was a measure of competency that resulted in acceptance. The interview material shows the extent to which many female narrators were willing to adopt the masculine standards they were trained to execute in order to succeed as police officers.

⁷⁷ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

At the same time, however, women frequently resorted to understandings of difference to achieve their goals. We have seen how they sometimes relied on notions of femininity to diffuse dangerous situations and avoid physical confrontations. As Shelly Evans indicated above, female Mounties also relied on their ability to talk their way out of tough situations, an alternative approach that ultimately differentiated the work of female Mounties from that of their male colleagues. The adoption of non-traditional approaches to policing by female Mounties, and the public's response to them, demonstrated that were willing to break out of conventional constructions of gender, power, and authority. Their difference motivated them to move away from a reliance on the use of force, as we will see below. A woman's willingness to engage in violence or the use of force was a measure of their equality to some. But their ability to develop alternative approaches to achieve the same results made them agents of change who were fully equal and effective as police officers. And, as the justices of the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in one decision, "true equality requires differences to be accommodated," a concept that was gradually accepted by members of the public.⁷⁸ In contrast, many male Mounties refused to relinquish traditional masculine standards or consider that alternative methods worked too. It was one way to justify their opposition to women in the RCMP and ensure the continued dominance of white males as law enforcement officers.

The Myth of Physical Prowess and Police Culture

At the centre of that opposition were discourses of police authority and the male police body. In the RCMP, as in most Canadian police departments, the myth that police officers had to be burly, tall, and strong to combat violence was often cited as the central reason for disallowing women from police ranks. The idea that male physical prowess was necessary to be an effective police officer had certainly been pervasive at the turn of the twentieth century, when women had begun their first foray into law enforcement. In Vancouver in 1919, for example, the city's police department employed "four women with police powers and one matron on duty in the jail." By 1928, however, just "two women constables and three police matrons without police authority" were employed by

⁷⁸ Justice Beverley McLachlin quoted in Judy Fudge and Hester Lessard, "Challenging Norms and Creating Precedents: The Tale of A Woman Firefighter in the Forests of British Columbia," *Work on Trial: Canadian Labour Law Struggles*, eds. Judy Fudge and Eric Tucker (Toronto: The Osgoode Society for Canadian Legal History, 2010): 341.

the department. Commanding officers had justified these changes in the status of the policewomen, particularly the removal of their police powers, by their perception that “women have not proved themselves as responsive to discipline as men.” Further, the women were deemed to be unable to meet the physical demands of police work: “[P]olice duty is, after all, a matter of strong-arm methods and . . . women’s arms are weaker than those of their brothers.”⁷⁹ Women’s bodies were not amenable to the effective performance of police work.

These gendered understandings about women and their bodies were common among Canadian police departments, where physical stature and race persisted as a central component of recruiting standards for most of the twentieth century. In Canada before 1974, the minimum height requirement for applicants to most Canadian police departments was set at 5’10.” It was a standard that few women, or for that matter many men, could meet. Yet, the RCMP’s decision to change its height and weight restrictions in 1974 was a highly controversial move. Indeed, most Mounties viewed their strength and height as their most effective weapon on the street because it intimidated others and ensured compliance from the public.⁸⁰ Nevertheless, the RCMP lowered its minimum height requirements for recruits to 5’8” for men and 5’4” for women to comply with the idea that physical differences should no longer be a justification for inequality.⁸¹ While these policy changes were official, unofficially the RCMP continued to prefer to hire men, particularly those of Anglo-Canadian descent. Male members of the RCMP belonged to a club of elite masculinity where their youth, virility, size, and strength idealized them as superior to other men, positioning them as representative of the Canadian state. As Steve Hewitt avers, “In a hierarchical and patriarchal Canada, the white, male Mountie was king.”⁸² The image of the RCMP was built around this concept, making the size and

⁷⁹ Evelyn Le Sueur, “Can Women Do Active Police Work in Vancouver?,” *Canadian Council of Churches/The Social Service Council of Canada* 10:12 (1928): 277.

⁸⁰ Bell, “Policewomen: Myths and Reality,” 118. The link between physical size and intimidation in American police departments was addressed in “The Female Fuzz,” *Newsweek* 80 (23 October 1972): 117.

⁸¹ Gisela Bock, “Women’s History and Gender History: Aspects of an International Debate,” *Gender and History* 1:1 (Spring 1989): 13. Recruits also had to be between the ages of nineteen and twenty-nine to join the RCMP in 1974. *The World at Six*, “RCMP Welcomes First Female Officers,” CBC Radio, 16 September 1974. <http://www.archives.cbc.ca/society/celebrations/clips/1643.htm> [accessed 12 October 2010].

⁸² Hewitt, “The Masculine Mountie,” 170.

race of the police body essential to the maintenance of the power of the state and those who governed it.

In the 1970s, most Canadian police departments held the same values that privileged white males and their bodies. Thus, not all departments were eager to follow the RCMP by lowering their height standards. In 1979, the Ottawa police department refused the application of a woman for the position of constable because she did not meet the physical requirements of 5'10" and 160 pounds.⁸³ The applicant took her case to the Ontario Human Rights Commission, where a Board of Inquiry ruled the "police height and weight requirements as discriminatory in effect against women,"⁸⁴ forcing the police department to modify their physical testing standards.⁸⁵ That same year, the Board also adjudicated a complaint that height and weight standards at the police department in Toronto were discriminatory against men because women were not required to meet the same criteria. The commission found that "separate height and weight requirements for women applicants to the police force were not discriminatory because they were not prejudicial to men."⁸⁶ The Commission's ruling acknowledged, as did the RCMP, that there was difference in equality and equality in difference.

Despite these ground-breaking rulings in Ontario, departments in other jurisdictions continued to impose height and weight restrictions on applicants. By 1982, just six of twenty-four Canadian police departments had no height or weight restrictions, and one, the Halifax police department, set a standard of 5'8" for both men and women.⁸⁷ These regulations continued to be challenged in courts across the country well into the 1990s as a number of communities sought to make their police departments more representative of the general population. By 1986, some police departments developed new physical testing standards for applicants in response to the elimination of

⁸³ Slaughter, "Women's Journey Into Policing."

⁸⁴ Lubomyr Chabursky, "The Employment Equity Act: An Examination of Its Development and Direction," *Ottawa Law Review* 24 (305): 313.

⁸⁵ Slaughter, "Women's Journey Into Policing."

⁸⁶ Chabursky, "The Employment Equity Act," 316.

⁸⁷ Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 124.

height and weight standards set by employment equity legislation.⁸⁸ The new tests included weight drag, flexibility, obstacle runs, victim recovery, hand strength, and other tests designed to measure the minimum strength and agility of an applicant.⁸⁹ The author of one RCMP study recommended the elimination of height and weight standards and the implementation of hiring standards based on the ability to do the work. By 1988, the RCMP had modified its physical testing system by adapting aspects of the new measurements being used by municipal departments.⁹⁰ These examples show how male police officers from a number of departments across the country, including the RCMP, accepted gendered ideas that assumed men were stronger and women were weaker. It was not until several Canadian female police officers challenged these standards in the courts that the tests became more inclusive.

Female Mounties destabilized a number of myths about the physical limitations of the female police body. All of the women interviewed for this study commented that they were not afraid of physical violence or confrontations; some, like Pam Osborne, admitted that they sometimes enjoyed them. Others, like Margaret Watson, “gained a sense of satisfaction in subduing a man.”⁹¹ Women in municipal departments did not shy away from physical violence either. Marlene Watson, who joined the Toronto Police department in 1964, received a number of physical injuries as a result of violent conflicts with members of the public during her long career as a police officer. In an interview with

⁸⁸ The federal *Employment Equity Act* came into effect in 1986. It “mandated the development of employment equity program within federally regulated workplaces” and required “federally regulated employers to review workplace policies and practices to identify systemic barriers and to set up proactive initiatives to promote equality for four designated groups: women, Aboriginal peoples, persons with disabilities, and members of visible minorities.” The *Act* was the result of recommendations made in the *Report of the Royal Commission on Equality in Employment* by Judge Rosalie Silberman Abella, who coined the term “employment equity” in the report. Colleen Sheppard, *Inclusive Equality: The Relational Dimensions of Systemic Discrimination in Canada* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2010), 28.

⁸⁹ These departments included Vancouver, British Columbia; Edmonton, Alberta; Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Toronto, Ontario. Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 199.

⁹⁰ Rod Olsen, interview with author, 4 January 2010. It was not until 1999, that the Supreme Court of Canada ruled that employment testing standards could not be based on capabilities that favoured men. British Columbia forest firefighter Tawney Meiorin brought suit against her employer after being laid off from her job despite a satisfactory job performance evaluation. The court ruled that Meiorin could not be laid off for failure to meet the requirements of a new physical fitness test based on men’s abilities, a test that had little to do with the ability to actually do the work. Fudge and Lessard, “Challenging Norms and Creating Precedent,” 340-41.

⁹¹ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

the *Toronto Star* on the occasion of her retirement, Watson commented, “I’ve been punched. I’ve had whiplash from kicks to the head. When you first join, you have a false sense of security. You think they won’t hit you because you’re a woman.” She also had her tailbone broken three times.⁹² Watson’s assumption that she would not be assaulted because she was a woman reveals that, at least initially, she too relied on notions of appropriate behaviour toward women and conventional understandings of gender even as she was transgressing those lines as a police officer.

We have already seen how some female Mounties benefitted from the spread of fictional stories about their physical confrontations with civilians, many of which grew to mythic proportions over time and geographical space. Serendipitous circumstances occasionally worked in their favour too, cementing their reputations and calling into question understandings of feminine weakness as a liability in policing. Several women used their individual training in physical fitness and sport to their advantage. Leslie Clark’s interest in marital arts had started before she joined the RCMP and continued after she was hired. At the time she was interviewed for this research, Clark held degrees in four disciplines: a second-degree black belt in jujitsu, a first-degree black belt in karate, a brown belt in judo, and a red belt in tae kwan do. Her martial arts qualifications led to a position as an instructor at Depot later in her career, but they also, not surprisingly, gave her confidence in terms of fighting while carrying out general policing duties. “I really had no problems. Even before I joined the RCMP, I had a black belt. I have belts in four disciplines, so fighting for me was never an issue. I’ve been hit, I’d hit, you know, I’m not scared of it. . . . I’m not scared of fighting in the general sense or in being physical.”⁹³ Many male police officers, however, assumed that the only way a woman could subdue a combative male was through specialized training in martial arts.

Janice Murdoch’s level of physical fitness also challenged assertions about the physical weakness of the female police body. As a dog handler, Murdoch was required to maintain a certain level of physical fitness that other police officers, male or female, did not possess. In addition to running marathons, Murdoch skied, competed in

⁹² Joe Fiorito, “Retiring Cop Broke Limits for Women,” (30 January 2008), <http://www.thestar.com/printArticle298685.htm> [accessed 4 March 2008].

⁹³ Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

triathlons, cycled and lifted weights, and played golf and tennis. Murdoch described the importance of remaining in good physical condition as a dog handler:

Dog handlers in general have a lot of injuries relating to their cores because our job is very unnatural in that you have this eighty pound dog pulling you off centre all the time. So, instead of it being just a run where your body is straight and in control, you're actually fighting the dog all the time. So you're pulling back always on one side more than the other. You're going over fences, and through trees and losing your balance a lot. Dog handlers have a lot of back injuries because if your core's weak, your back is going to be injured. [They also have a lot of] knee injuries and ankle injuries. So I do a lot of exercises to combat that. I weight train at least once a week, I run probably three times a week, and then I swim and I bike. I ski a lot in the winter.⁹⁴

Murdoch was also aware that as she aged many of the suspects that she would be pursuing would be younger than she was, a development she considered incentive enough to stay in top physical condition.

Given the histories of female Mounties like Murdoch and others discussed above, it is somewhat surprising that women continued to be described in terms of physical weakness by male police officers for decades after their entrance into the occupation. This suggests that male physical prowess as absolutely necessary in policing was not only a myth, but the apex of an artificial hierarchy of ability reliant on understandings of biological difference rather than actualities.⁹⁵ Indeed, the RCMP's own studies on women and policing discussed how perceptions of female weakness shadowed women's careers from training at Depot onwards. According to one study conducted in 1984, male recruits at Depot "were concerned about females' (lower) physical strength," an assumption that marginalized women as a "minority who have to prove themselves" even before they left the academy.⁹⁶ The study's conclusions suggest that the men who were hired as recruits held specific beliefs about women as the weaker sex and the female body as insufficient for policing duties prior to their hiring. Since police agencies

⁹⁴ Janice Murdoch, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

⁹⁵ Daniel E. Bender, "'Too Much of Distasteful Masculinity': Historicizing Sexual Harassment in the Garment Sweatshop and Factory," *Journal of Women's History* 15:4 (Winter 2004): 93.

⁹⁶ Robert Loo, *Interim Report: Stressors for Women in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police*, (June 1984), 9-10. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08 (14 July 2008). Hereinafter referred to as *Interim Report*.

recruited from the local community, the attitudes and beliefs of male recruits were a reflection of broader gendered understandings in operation in Canadian society at the time.⁹⁷

The converse of the original myth, the myth of female physical limitation, was subsequently reproduced in the field. In 1986, an RCMP study of female constables in “E” Division (British Columbia/Yukon) found that a woman’s inability to handle violence or physical confrontation was often presumed by male respondents. This perception emerged time and again in the comments of male police officers, particularly of NCOs, an older generation of police supervisor who believed that most female police officers were unsuitable for general duty. Indeed, women were singled out as requiring additional physical training to compensate for their inherent physical weakness. Women were also described as unreliable and ineffective by male constables. For instance, one male constable commented that “[i]n the field male members are continually covering for female members. Males cannot rely on female response in emergency situations.” Another maintained that “[r]egardless of ability and service or otherwise, female m[embers] receive and need more backup at violence related complaints.”⁹⁸ It was obvious that many male Mounties perceived all women, not just some, as incapable of effective police work based on ideas of their physical limitations.

Gendered attitudes emerged again in response to a question regarding the reasons why female Mounties were experiencing difficulties adapting to police work. An overwhelming majority of male constables and their supervisors considered that, because of “physical inferiority and [the] sensitive nature of females, adaptation is hardest [to the] violent and physical aspects of policework.”⁹⁹ One male constable clarified his response in this way: “Females do not have the physical size/strength to take part in violence, and as a result are apprehensive in attending situations where they may encounter any violence.” Another explained that “females face an internal conflict between their natural femininity and the masculine role of police work.”¹⁰⁰ These comments reveal how male RCMP officers associated specific characteristics with

⁹⁷ Kurtz, “Controlled Burn,” 221.

⁹⁸ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 63; 67; 72.

⁹⁹ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 144.

¹⁰⁰ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 147.

femininity, which they described as “natural” and therefore unchangeable. Most male Mounties saw women as socialized to be accommodating rather than aggressive and as emotional rather than rational beings. In contrast, they associated heroic masculinity and police authority with power, aggression, rationality, and physical strength. It was an image of policing that left little room for alternative approaches to law enforcement.

The myth of male physical prowess as integral to police work was common in police departments across North America. One 1982 study of American police departments examined “the issue of the physical capability of women police” – and refuted “the commonly expressed myth that policing is essentially male work because only men have the physical strength needed to perform patrol [or general duties in RCMP parlance].”¹⁰¹ In this study, Roi Townsey evaluated data acquired from eight American police departments in the 1970s to determine whether claims of the physical limitations of female police officers were valid. He concluded that “women perform the patrol function in municipal, county, and state police settings as ably as men, and that it is feasible to hire and deploy women as officers the same as men.”¹⁰² Townsey’s findings indicated that perceptions about the inadequacy of the female police body for patrol functions were unfounded. Nevertheless, the belief persisted and was a common trope used to justify the exclusion of women from policing ranks, even when evidence to the contrary was presented.

Although male police officers advanced the idea that male physical prowess was an absolute necessity in enforcing the law, researchers took exception to this viewpoint. The idea that police officers were obliged to engage in a constant stream of violence, requiring the continuous use of physical force, was a misconception according to criminologist Daniel Bell, who found that in 1969, “approximately 90 percent of a police

¹⁰¹ Roi D. Townsey, “Female Patrol Officers: A Review of the Physical Capability Issue,” *The Criminal Justice System and Women: Women Offenders, Victims, Workers*, eds. Barbara Raffel Price and Natalie J. Sokoloff (New York: Clark Boardman Company, 1982), 413. Also see Kimberly A. Lonsway, “Tearing Down the Wall: Problems with Consistency, Validity, and Adverse Impact of Physical Agility Testing in Police Selection,” *Police Quarterly* 6:3 (September 2003); “Despite Some Gains, Female Cops Still Find Too Few Cracks in the Glass Ceiling,” *Law Enforcement News* 26 (June 2000): 9-10;

¹⁰² Townsey, “Female Patrol Officers,” 413.

officer's time was spent in noncriminal service activities."¹⁰³ By 1993, one researcher found that just 15 percent of police calls involved violent intervention, most of which could be diffused if an officer had the ability to "talk to people."¹⁰⁴ In 2003, researcher Venessa Garcia examined the existence of the so-called "80-20 secret" of police work: "This secret is that 80% of a police officer's time is spent doing social-work-type jobs, such as domestic disturbances/violence, disturbances of the peace, and traffic control . . . [while] 20% of the time is spent fighting crime, such as homicide, narcotics, kidnapping, and armed robbery." According to Garcia, most recruits graduating from police academies believed the opposite was true, that 80 percent of their time would be spent fighting crime.¹⁰⁵ This is not surprising, given that the curriculum in many academies in the 1970s and 80s, including the RCMP's, placed a heavy emphasis on the management of violence but afforded minimal amounts of time to developing skills such as resolving interpersonal disputes.¹⁰⁶

The myth of male physical prowess as an essential part of policing must be reconsidered given that, statistically, the police officer's work is often more mundane than violent but also because female police officers were able to handle dangerous situations. Nevertheless, the idea of policing as a purely masculine endeavour persisted within police culture and in the eyes of the public. Sociologist Susan Ehrlich Martin argues that there was a "wide gap" between the public image of policing and crime fighting as masculine, and the work the police actually do.¹⁰⁷ She suggests that both

¹⁰³ Bell, "Policewomen: Myths and Reality," 115. It appears this was generally true of RCMP policing duties throughout much of the twentieth century. In a search of RCMP records for 1919, Steve Hewitt found that the "day-to-day life of most Mounties consisted of uneventful patrols" that were only rarely punctuated with occasional "bursts of excitement." Hewitt maintained that the duties of "an ordinary Mountie were incredibly banal." Hewitt, "The Masculine Mountie," 159. Interestingly, some Canadian police forces began to connect the idea of service with police work by changing their names in the latter decades of the twentieth century. For example, the Metro Toronto Police was renamed in 1995 to Metro Toronto Police Service and again in 1998 to Toronto Police Service. By doing away with the idea of the police as a "force" and repackaging it as a "service," the new name more accurately reflected the work performed by Toronto police officers.

¹⁰⁴ Jonathan M. Lazar, *Female Police Officers: Their Past, Present and Future*, unpublished undergraduate paper, March 1993. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08 (14 July 2008).

¹⁰⁵ Venessa Garcia, "'Difference' in the Police Department: Women, Policing, and 'Doing Gender,'" *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 19 (2003): 340.

¹⁰⁶ Herbert, "'Hard Charger' or 'Station Queen,'" 59.

¹⁰⁷ Martin, "Police Force or Police Service?," 115.

types of scenarios occur in policing; while most calls do not require physical confrontation and aggressive crime fighting, there are incidents in which conflict and violence are probable. As a result, the police officer has an opportunity to “interpret an event either as a conflict requiring aggressive response or an interpersonal dispute requiring informal conflict resolution.”¹⁰⁸ But violence was a principle means of obtaining prestige for male police officers, who generally viewed the work as a battle against foes in which physical force and courage determined the victor.¹⁰⁹

Interpreting whether or not a situation required an aggressive response or conflict resolution was a skillset that women, and some men, brought to the occupation. For all of the female police officers interviewed for this research, negotiation rather than physical confrontation was employed on a regular basis. RCMP constable Kate Morton did not like engaging in physical fights and preferred not to do it. She found that if there was a way of “talking some guy into the back of the car, it was easier.”¹¹⁰ Similarly, Carolyn Harper discovered that her best weapons were her gender and her ability to talk her way out of dangerous situations. “If the person was male and they still had some faculties about them when a female officer arrived, they would try not to look like a fool. They would try to pull themselves together” when negotiating with a female Mountie.¹¹¹ According to one female survey respondent, “There is a place for a female in any police role, both operational and administrative. You don’t have to be a fighter to be a good GD police person.” This woman cited an ability to talk your way through difficulties as essential in police work for both men and women.¹¹² However, it was a skill that was not given the same priority as physical force, an indication that a hierarchy of skills was in operation in the RCMP.

A woman’s ability to negotiate was cited by other narrators as the central difference between the ways male and female RCMP officers approached their work. Allison Palmer explained:

¹⁰⁸ Martin, “Police Force or Police Service?,” 115.

¹⁰⁹ Herbert, “‘Hard Charger’ or ‘Station Queen’,” 61.

¹¹⁰ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

¹¹¹ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

¹¹² Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 82.

I don't think there are differences as far as what the job is and what needs to be done. I think that the guys used to approach it from a muscle and brawn type of thing. With me, I would use my mouth. I would talk my way out of situations because I, I mean, I'm tall but I'm small-boned. I don't have a lot of strength. I have seen female members who have . . . tried to be one of the guys [during confrontations] and things escalated. So, I mean, there are women who wanted to act just like the men, and there are those of us who knew we couldn't perform that way, so we had to use much more of a psychological approach rather than physical.¹¹³

Palmer, who was never assaulted on the job during twenty years of patrol work, recalled that she did have to get physical a number of times. But in the mid-1970s, "people still had some respect for women" and, unless they were too drunk to notice that they were dealing with a female officer, very few men would engage with her in a physical altercation. Most of the time, she relied on her negotiation skills to resolve tough situations and make an arrest: "When you think about it, we want to do the same job [as male officers], but you're just going to take a little different tactic to get there."¹¹⁴ The fact that Palmer relied on persuasion rather than physical aggression suggests that this approach likely prevented her from being assaulted on the job. But her comment that people "still had respect" for women illustrates that some female Mounties, at least in the 1970s, initially anticipated that they would benefit from gendered attitudes about femininity in their dealings with the public. It was an expectation that made women police officers complicit in perpetuating dichotomous arguments that they could be equal or different, but not both. At the same time, however, women were exercising agency by employing alternative techniques while working out their own place within the occupation.

When Shelly Evans was asked about differences between male and female approaches to law enforcement, she responded, "The boys still see it as the pursuits, the fighting, breaking heads, you know. There's always the helping people in the background [of their minds], but boys are still boys you know. I think women [join the RCMP] to help people."¹¹⁵ Marianne Robson found that dealing with the public at her first posting to a mining community was extremely physical. Still, she relied on negotiation as

¹¹³ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

¹¹⁴ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

¹¹⁵ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

much as possible: “Because I was a woman, I knew I had to use the strongest muscle I had and that was my tongue. So that aggressiveness of police officers . . . I wasn’t able to do that. So I treated community people the way I wanted to be treated.”¹¹⁶ Carol Franklin also talked her way out of a number of difficult situations. She stated that “I would be able to talk, to use that skillset. . . . Does it always work? Of course not. . . . [But] you don’t need to resolve issues [with force and] you don’t need to get into a confrontation to be effective.”¹¹⁷ Of course, dangerous situations emerged for female police officers that left little time for negotiation and required split-second decisions. RCMP dog handler Lauren Fleming recalled tracking an armed suspect who was prepared to shoot her dog: “The other members that were with me, they ended up firing and shooting [wounding the suspect]. The position I was in, I just wasn’t in a position to draw my firearm. There were three others that were in position, so they ended up shooting him. Yeah, he tried to kill my dog. He put the gun right on her head and fired and there was a misfire.”¹¹⁸ In this situation, there was little time to negotiate with the suspect, given that he was armed and firing his revolver, causing the RCMP officers who were present to fear for their safety.

The conciliatory approach adopted by all of the female police officers who participated in this research was viewed as the feminization of the occupation, whereby an aggressive and confrontational model was de-emphasized in favour of cooperative interactions with civilians. Prior to the arrival of female police officers, police work had been portrayed as more akin to combat than social work.¹¹⁹ Police officers had been viewed in Canadian society as aggressive crime fighters whose physical stature and strength conveyed messages of intimidation and demanded compliance. Danger was linked to authority and the use of force. Public policing was a male preserve in Canada, and the renegotiation of that space following the arrival of women threatened a masculinist police culture that was resistant to relinquishing control to female police bodies, in whole or in part.

¹¹⁶ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹¹⁷ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

¹¹⁸ Lauren Fleming, interview with author, 17 April 2008. Police dogs are considered members of the RCMP and are issued with a regimental number.

¹¹⁹ Herbert, “Hard Charger or Station Queen,” 63.

The preference of female Mounties to use preventive rather than punitive approaches to police work was most evident in arrest statistics. In fact, in research undertaken for the RCMP's Health Services Directorate in 1996, Dr. Lynn Andrews suggested that the criteria used in the RCMP's annual performance evaluations might not be appropriate for women. While high arrest rates traditionally signaled good performance, women's preference for de-escalating violence often resulted in lower arrest rates, suggesting that a different measure of performance might be needed.¹²⁰ In the United States, lower arrest rates in the 1970s were usually touted as proof that women were incapable of effectively enforcing the law. Although women "required arrest assistance more often than men," they also made fewer arrests because of their policing style according to one researcher. Citing arrest rates in Washington, DC, as an example, Townsey discovered that although women made fewer arrests, they also "sustained a higher conviction rate making it likely that they made fewer unnecessary arrests or higher quality ones."¹²¹ Lower arrest rates for women supported the fact that they preferred to negotiate rather than physically confront and arrest suspects.

The possibility of imminent death was another important aspect of police culture and one reason why male officers persisted in emphasizing the importance of physical size. Yet, according to Statistics Canada, 133 police officers (92 percent) who were murdered in Canada between 1961 and 2009 were killed with a firearm, suggesting that physical size was not a factor in preventing death.¹²² Further, statistics showed that "nearly 8 in 10 officers were not wearing protective body armour" (now referred to as Kevlar vests) at the time they were shot. This was particularly true in the 1960s and 1970s, before police departments began to regularly issue Kevlar vests to its officers.¹²³ The potential for death during a policing incident, as well as the ability to use deadly force against civilians, was a significant stressor for police officers, as the oral histories below will show.¹²⁴ But it was also an occupational risk that contributed to the unity and

¹²⁰ Lynn Andrews, "Stress in Women Police," *RCMP Health Services Directorate* (December 1996): unnumbered. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08 (14 July 2008).

¹²¹ Townsey, "Female Patrol Officers," 416.

¹²² Dunn, Sara, "Police Officers Murdered in the Line of Duty, 1961 to 2009," Statistics Canada (Fall 2010). <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010003/arcuke/11354-eng.html> [accessed 21 May 2012].

¹²³ Dunn, "Police Officers Murdered in the Line of Duty."

¹²⁴ Robert Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 2nd ed. (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 88.

bonding amongst police officers. P.A.J. Waddington discovered in his study of police officers that what united them across many jurisdictions was their mandate to kill their fellow citizens, if necessary.¹²⁵ The threat of death on the job also distinguished policing from most other occupations.¹²⁶ While occupations such as the forest or mining industries also had the potential to endanger workers' bodies, the police role was unusual in that it required officers to face unpredictable encounters with other people. Police officers confronted the threat of sudden attack from another person, not the more calculable risks of physical or environmental hazards.¹²⁷ As a result, the capacity for members of the RCMP to deliver lethal force informed the organizational structure of the police force. By associating the male police body with the use of deadly force, the assumption that power and authority could only be conveyed through men became normalized.

RCMP Supervisors and Opposition to Female Mounties

The idealization of the male police body and its connection to the power and authority of the state meant that any redefinition of police work as anything other than inherently masculine would be stiffly resisted. In the 1970s and 80s, opposition to women in the RCMP was strongest among NCOs. Chapter one illustrated how senior NCOs were the group most resistant to the hiring of women as police officers during discussions surrounding the development of the Division Staff Relations Representative (DSRR) system in 1974. In the field, many supervisors played a primary role in refusing to accept the full integration of female Mounties, and their actions positioned them as significant mediators of how the women were received as police officers. As one female survey respondent commented, "I think we all expected a degree of resistance upon

¹²⁵ P.A.J. Waddington, *Policing Citizens: Authority and Rights* (Philadelphia, PA: UCL Press, 1999), 112.

¹²⁶ The only other group of workers more at risk of on-the-job homicide in Canada was taxi drivers, with twice the work-related death rate of police officers, according to Statistics Canada. All but four police homicides between 1961 and 2009 were against male officers with less than five years of service. Ninety-five percent of those accused of murdering a police officer were male. Police officers were more likely to be killed during robbery investigations or during domestic disputes. The statistics do not include officers who were killed as a result of other causes, such as traffic accidents. See Sara Dunn, "Police Officers Murdered in the Line of Duty, 1961 to 2009," *Statistics Canada* (Fall 2010), <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-002-x/2010003/arcuke/11354-eng.html> [accessed 21 May 2012].

¹²⁷ Reiner, *The Politics of the Police*, 88.

entering the Force from our peers – however, the out-and-out bias and lack of support from many Senior NCOs was a shock.”¹²⁸ The RCMP’s own studies pointed to NCOs as a barrier to the success of women in the field. The findings of one concluded that supervisors felt more negatively than male and female constables about the role of women in the RCMP and that conventional beliefs about the role of women were more deeply engrained in senior police officers.¹²⁹ The RCMP’s psychologist, writing in 1984, found that “supervisors with negative attitudes can make life difficult for female subordinates,”¹³⁰ an understatement that failed to describe the power struggles that were taking place in RCMP detachments across the country.

Why was this particular group of male RCMP officers so resistant to the presence of female Mounties? NCOs resisted any reform that had the potential to redefine their role as police officers. “The gendered nature of the police image serves as a bulwark against change” according to one researcher, and NCOs were well-placed to oppose any changes to the masculinist image of the Mountie hero.¹³¹ One study in particular, *The Role of Female Constables in “E” Division*, provides insights. The study was undertaken in 1985 by S/Sgt. S.E. Stark at the behest of the commanding officers of “E” Division (BC/Yukon), the RCMP’s largest division at the time. Commanding officers initiated the study in an attempt to address some of the significant problems being encountered by female Mounties in the division. Information was gathered through a questionnaire that was distributed to a selected sample of members of the RCMP. Two questionnaires were developed – one for constables and one for supervisors – that asked questions about a variety of issues that women officers experienced, including training, the public, general duty work, violence, reception by Mountie wives, social isolation, physical capabilities, and adaptation to the work.¹³²

The anonymous comments made by supervisors revealed that NCOs relied on conventional understandings of femininity and the female body in their assessments of female Mounties. According to one NCO, “The Male member is physically more capable.

¹²⁸ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 65.

¹²⁹ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 167.

¹³⁰ Loo, *Interim Report*, 11.

¹³¹ Herbert, “‘Hard Charger’ or ‘Station Queen’,” 62.

¹³² Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 8. The survey did not ask questions related to the issue of harassment.

Female members tend to be more of a social worker type, rather than enforcement minded. It is difficult for a woman to take charge of a situation involving men, unless of course it's marriage." Another commented, "Psychologically most women are not brought up to assume a position of authority, and their size, in most cases, does not exude the authority figure to the general public."¹³³ In response to the question about whether female Mounties should receive in-service training courses to help them adapt to operational police duties, one supervisor commented, "This area is hardly worth commenting on. It is sufficient to note there are no female members at any of our one and two man detachments. No amount of training can prepare a female member for that type of duty."¹³⁴

Several supervisors referred to the unsuitability of women to perform general police duties; 85 percent viewed women as less able than men to provide adequate backup in potentially violent or physical confrontations.¹³⁵ Further, 88 percent of supervisors responded that they preferred to send men to assist with calls involving physical confrontation.¹³⁶ Clearly many NCOs viewed female Mounties as an operational liability and a safety concern when performing general duties. Given the perceived limitations of the female body, many assumed that women were only capable of specific or specialized police functions. As a result, the assignment of certain tasks to female police officers by their supervisors soon emerged as a gendered division of labour within the RCMP. On a practical level, it denied the women experience in dealing with violence or the opportunity to gain self-confidence through interactions with potentially violent civilians. On the other hand, by assigning women to tasks they considered to be within their capabilities, supervisors aggravated a perception that women were receiving preferential treatment. The fact that some NCOs screened the type of calls that they assigned female officers and the fact that some were protective of the women created difficulties for those women who expected to be treated the same as male police officers.

Some supervisors blamed the women officers themselves for fostering negative opinions about female Mounties. According to one, "Most female members appear to

¹³³ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 147-48.

¹³⁴ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 67.

¹³⁵ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 89.

¹³⁶ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 90.

have the opinion that they are something special and should not be required to perform the same duties as male members. This attitude often causes rifts in communication and subsequently a more difficult time for female members."¹³⁷ His observations indicate that some women expected, and received, what was thought to be preferential treatment, suggesting that both women and men were struggling with shifting understandings of gender during a period when female Mounties were attempting to integrate. The oral histories reveal that some of these concerns were not unfounded. Margaret Watson recalled that some women used their femininity as a reason not to back up a fellow officer or to avoid physical confrontations, a dangerous approach to police work. Watson was offended by these female officers, who gave all female police officers a bad name. Others would look to male Mounties to protect them, adding to the perception that female Mounties preferred to avoid violent situations. Watson commented that she "despised cowardly women" and maintained that "if you take the same pay, you have to be prepared to get physical."¹³⁸ As Watson's comments illustrate, those female police officers who retained a strong feminine identity risked ostracization by both male and female police officers.¹³⁹

Several of the women interviewed for this study expressed the concern that women who displayed overtly feminine behaviour only served to complicate the working lives of other female officers who were interested in establishing their authority as police officers. Shelly Evans commented:

The female members don't do themselves any favours either. You know, I look at some of the women sometimes and think, "Why the hell did you join this organization? What did you think you were doing here?" Because if you're here to flirt and be some giddy little girl and leave all the dirty work to the boys, well you're making this problem worse. And there's a lot of little girls out there that shouldn't be in this job. And then there's the resentment [from men who think], "Well look, we have to carry her."¹⁴⁰

Although some women reinforced the opinion of male officers that all female Mounties expected preferential treatment, the comments of Watson and Evans demonstrate that

¹³⁷ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 65.

¹³⁸ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹³⁹ Herbert, "'Hard Charger' or 'Station Queen'," 62.

¹⁴⁰ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

there was a lack of understanding that it was possible for women to be different without being subordinate. What male officers viewed as a bid for preferential treatment was an attempt by some female police officers to have their equality and their difference acknowledged, even if they might not have thought about it in those terms at the time.

But understandings of gender were slow to change and many female police officers struggled to duplicate the masculine characteristics deemed necessary for police work. Aggression was viewed as an essential aspect in policing, and many supervisors pushed the women to be more assertive with the public. Trish O'Brien was twenty-two years old when she was stationed in the Maritimes in 1975. She recalled that the men she worked with at her first posting treated her "like gold" and that her trainer did not afford her preferential treatment. But her supervisor had difficulty adjusting to having a woman on his watch for the first time:

The boss struggled with it. He was the sergeant in charge and he was old school. And he was very reluctant about me out there. He was pushing for me, I was a little bit timid. . . . I needed to get out there and get more impaired drivers. That was his thing. He, in one way he was a little protective, in another way he was pushing me to be more assertive and aggressive, and so on. I was so green I was like a cucumber when I came out [of training].¹⁴¹

O'Brien's lack of assertiveness was a reflection of the way that girls and young women were socialized in Canadian society at the time. Assertiveness and aggression were socially constructed as masculine. Aggressive behaviour was instilled in boys, whereas girls were trained to be demure and accommodating. For women entering the occupation of policing, assertiveness and aggression were characteristics that they were required to adopt if they were expected to be effective police officers.

Supervisors in charge of policing regions where individuals patrolled vast expanses of geographical space were concerned about the ability of female officers to be assertive. Mark Baker, who was stationed as a corporal at a highway patrol unit in the Yukon, recalled that he and three constables were expected to patrol 3400 miles of highway, an area that covered twelve detachments. Although he did not feel it necessary

¹⁴¹ Trish O'Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

to check on his men regularly when they were out on patrol for a week or more at a time, he did check on his first female constable on a daily basis:

When I came into work in the morning I would check with Telecoms to see if they'd heard from her, and where she was and whether she'd call me for that morning yet, and when they last heard from her. If she went 10-7 [the Radio 10 Code for "out of service"] to her residence at 11:30 at night and they hadn't heard from her by 8:00 o'clock in the morning, then I'd check at noon again. . . . I don't know, if [I was] protective . . . or maybe [I] had a little less confidence in this person than I had in my male members, but I don't think it was gender specific . . . She was not as assertive. I suppose that's the best way I could put it.¹⁴²

For Baker, working with his first female Mountie challenged him to come to terms with his socially constructed understanding that the female body was vulnerable and that female police officers were in need of protection. Baker's assessment that this constable needed to adopt more manly characteristics such as aggression to convey authority, ignited a paternalistic concern for her safety. His desire to maintain daily contact revealed his reluctance to rely on her training at Depot as sufficient when handling physical confrontations. In contrast to the traditional image of the solitary Mountie hero patrolling and ultimately taming the frozen Canadian north, female Mounties were seen to be physically threatened by large and isolated geographical spaces, especially by an older generation of men adjusting to the presence of female constables.

The aversion of many of the RCMP supervisors to women's performing general duty work was closely tied to police identity and the heroic image of the RCMP. Since general duties were highly visible to the Canadian public, they were one area where the image of Mounties as heroic and manly warriors against crime was more likely to be cultivated and reinforced. As a result, women were not welcome participants. The alternative approaches they brought to the occupation were an affront to NCOs who were in charge of a domain they viewed as inherently masculine. NCOs were the mediators of the iconic Mountie image, and they were well-positioned to either reinforce conventional relations of power between men and women in society and within the RCMP, or adapt to shifting understandings of masculine and feminine roles. Many chose the former course. Furthermore, since commanding officers relied on NCOs to assure

¹⁴² Mark Baker, interview with author, 10 February 2009.

the smooth running of the detachment, the cooperation of the public, and the effectiveness of the rank-and-file in the performance of their duties, the power that NCOs wielded was formidable.

The operational decisions being made by NCOs with regard to female Mounties did not go unnoticed by male constables. One constable observed, “Females are, in some cases, directed away from violent and unsavory duties such as bar fights, drunken and wild parties, and situations that may require brute strength and fighting abilities.” Another noted, “It is still habit to assign violent complaints to male members more frequently, or to ensure back-up more quickly if a female member is the first to receive the complaint.” Still another commented, “Females are not sent to violent or physically threatening situations as readily, and with good reason.”¹⁴³ Attitudes towards female Mounties expressed by NCOs often informed the attitudes of men in the lower ranks who observed that women were treated differently by their supervisors. As a result, some adopted similar ideas about the physical limitations of women that had more to do with conventional understandings of femininity rather than ability.

Whether or not these attitudes resulted in women being placed in danger is uncertain. The female Mounties interviewed for this research did not make the claim that male police officers threatened or even refused to back them up during violent calls. While Shelly Evans maintained that she did not experience dangerous situations as a result of a male police officer’s failure to respond, she also commented,

I did work with members (both male and female) who were openly scared about going to certain calls and I have been left high-and-dry at calls by myself before. Not that this was done out of the other members being mean, or hoping I would get hurt – but more that they were scared themselves. . . . If I called for backup there was never any instance where I felt they had not responded as quickly as they could. And I returned the favor.¹⁴⁴

Being afraid was far from the manly image the RCMP preferred to project. While many Mounties undoubtedly engaged in violent acts, many men were often afraid during dangerous situations, as chapter five will demonstrate. Although Evans did not

¹⁴³ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 85.

¹⁴⁴ Shelly Evans, email communication with author, 10 May 2012.

experience members of the RCMP who intentionally failed to assist her, female officers working in some other police departments were not as fortunate. A study of police officers in Britain and the United States conducted in the late 1980s found that female police officers in Britain “reported difficulties with receiving backup, with men responding too fast, too slow, or not at all.” The lack of adequate response was because women were viewed as “ratebusters” who worked too hard and threatened men’s positions.¹⁴⁵

While some NCOs took a paternalistic approach to female Mounties, others engaged in systematic harassment in an attempt to force a female police officer to resign or ask to be transferred. The experience of Shelly Evans illustrates the forms that the harassment took. Evans was the first female Mountie to be posted to general duties at a small, five-member detachment western Canada in the 1980s. There she encountered an NCO who “had a problem with women and made my life a living hell there for two years.” Evans described the work, her roommates, and her male colleagues as “fabulous” at this posting. It was not long, however, before she became the object of the NCO’s mentally and verbally abusive behaviour:

You’d work all night [and he’d] be phoning you first thing in the morning [asking], “Where’s this, where’s that, why wasn’t this written up? You put a claim in on my desk for overtime. I’m only giving you half.” Verbally tell you to do stuff and then shit all over your [investigation] files. Demeaning. Abusive. Rescheduling you so that you’re working a month of nights. Stuff like that. Cancelling your [vacation] leave. Very tormenting [and] very abusive.¹⁴⁶

The situation with her NCO deteriorated to the point where Evans complained to the DSRR in her area, who offered to arrange for a transfer for her to another detachment. In response, Evans told the representative, “That’s exactly what they want. I’m the first female at this posting and I’m not leaving until my time is done. Because it will ruin it and set the stage for any other females coming in here. I’m not doing it.”¹⁴⁷ The response of the divisional representative to Evans’s complaint illustrates how the system of representation was complicit in perpetuating the masculinist values of RCMP culture by trying to diffuse women’s complaints. It is worth noting here that divisional

¹⁴⁵ Quoted in Andrews, “Stress in Women Police,” 12.

¹⁴⁶ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁴⁷ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

representatives, although nominated and voted into the position by the rank-and-file, were also NCOs, suggesting a further link between rank and the perpetuation of gendered attitudes toward female Mounties. Although their rank was officially downplayed in an effort to project an image of advocacy within the RCMP, their willingness to deal objectively with complaints made by women was questionable, as Evans's example shows.¹⁴⁸

The DSRR system and its representatives, as part of the organizational structure of the RCMP, at times reinforced the discrimination against women that was taking place. As one researcher commented, systemic discrimination is sometimes perpetuated by individuals who are part of institutions that endorse the ideals of equality.¹⁴⁹ Rather than advocating for Evans and working on her behalf, the DSRR's solution to the problems being created by this particular NCO was to transfer Evans, rather than lodge a formal complaint against the NCO. Evans correctly assessed the situation; she later learned that the NCO transferred his abusive behaviour to the male Aboriginal constable at the detachment after she left.¹⁵⁰ For this supervisor, anyone who did not fit into the dominant group, white, Anglo-Canadian masculinity was a target of his gendered and racist behaviour.

The DSRR system gave supervisors unfettered power since they did not suffer any negative consequences as a result of their behaviour toward minority groups within the organization. That is not to say that all male Mounties who engaged in harassment tactics were never transferred. The choice to transfer these men rather than discipline them, however, simply allowed the harassment to continue in other locations. The problem was further exacerbated by the inability of the police force to directly fire one of its police officers. Because members of the RCMP were federal employees, only the

¹⁴⁸ Men continued to dominate the rank of NCO in Canadian police departments between 1986 and 2010. In 1986, 99.5 percent of NCOs in Canada were male and just 0.5 percent were female. By 2010, 84.8 percent were male and 15.2 percent were female. (Data on the rank of Canadian police officers prior to 1986 is unavailable.) See "Table 5: Male and Female Police Officers by Rank, Canada, 1986 to 2010," Canadian Centre for Justice Statistics, Police Administration Survey, *Statistics Canada*, <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/85-225-x/2010000/t005-eng.html> [accessed 11 May 2011].

¹⁴⁹ Sheppard, *Inclusive Equality*, 22.

¹⁵⁰ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

federal government had the power to dismiss them.¹⁵¹ More often than not, however, it was the women who were transferred or who resigned following a harassment complaint against a more senior officer. It was one more way that the organizational structure of the RCMP facilitated, rather than prevented, the harassment of female police officers.

Evans did tough it out for two more years before being transferred. She was eventually diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), “not [from] my job, not from the situations I’ve been in, not the gore I’ve seen, the horrible situations, or anything like that. I’ve always dealt with that. But I now am on a disability . . . based on how people treated me and how I had to live in the policing environment. Not because of the job.”¹⁵² A toxic work environment had significant personal ramifications for Evans that went well beyond simply being challenged by the physicality and dangers of her job. For Evans, a sense of being in a battle for personal survival was a result of the level of harassment being applied by her NCO. Psychologist Elizabeth Bannerman, in her study of literature on policing dating from the 1970s, found that the stressors experienced by female police officers had little to do with situations involving physical danger but were cumulative stressors on the job that were not directly related to police duties.¹⁵³ Evans’s example clearly illustrates the ways in which many women in the RCMP experienced policing differently from their male peers. NCOs responded to female police officers through a gendered lens that reflected notions of femininity and rested on assumptions about the inferiority abilities of women working in the occupation.

Evans had more than one supervisor who did not respect female Mounties. She recalled another NCO who would get frustrated with her over the files she was working on, wanting her to process or conclude them quickly. Once, she resisted by asking for more time to investigate and conduct interviews. He vented his frustration, saying, “Why can’t you be like the other female members in this detachment and just be happy you have a job?” Evans further commented, “And this is the man writing your assessments.

¹⁵¹ Colin Kenny, “Colin Kenny on the RCMP: Bigger Mandate, Fewer Officers,” *National Post*, 8 May 2012. <http://fullcomment/nationalpost.com/2012/05/08/colin-kenny-on-the-rcmp-bigger-mandate-fewer-officers.html> [accessed 8 May 2012].

¹⁵² Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁵³ Elizabeth D. Bannerman, “Female Police Officers: The Relationship Between Social Support, Interactional Style, and Occupational Stress and Strain” (Ph.D. diss., Simon Fraser University, 1996), 184.

This is the man controlling where you go and what you do.”¹⁵⁴ Researchers categorize these types of remarks by a supervisor as sexist and a form of gender harassment since they “convey direct rejection of non-traditional women and their right to work in higher paying fields.”¹⁵⁵ When asked whether she complained about this NCO to senior officers, Evans commented, “You just rode it out; you wouldn’t make a complaint. There was just no way. It’s even dangerous to make complaints these days. It’s just something that you don’t do. There’s always retaliation. Always.”¹⁵⁶ Retaliation against female Mounties who resisted an NCO’s actions by lodging complaints against them, symbolized the power struggle between the dominant group and the women who threatened the culture of masculinity that was ingrained in policing.

Other female Mounties thought the way Evans did. Marianne Robson gave a similar response when asked why women did not complain about harassment to superior officers:

Your job could be in jeopardy. Or you’d be seen as a whiner and complainer. Like, “You want to play with the boys? Come on, this is the boys’ game.” So, you know, you’ve gotta be like the boys and go along with what the boys want. Oh, no. Complaining? Absolutely not. And that was pretty well true throughout my whole career. That although you knew something wasn’t kosher, wasn’t right, I think that, you know what? To complain would cost you your career or a promotion or anything else.¹⁵⁷

The threat of retaliation and labeling suggests that the difficulties women experienced were systemic since they did not utilize the complaint process that was available to them. Few were willing to risk the consequences if their complaint was ignored or the offending supervisor was not held to account for his actions. “The police hierarchy encouraged deference rather than complaint,” according to researcher Louise Jackson in her study of policing in Britain during the twentieth century.¹⁵⁸ The RCMP was no different, and the force’s paramilitary structure facilitated the power NCOs held over lower-ranking officers who filed formal complaints. The women of the RCMP were not

¹⁵⁴ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁵⁵ Andrews, “Stress in Women Police,” 5.

¹⁵⁶ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁵⁷ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹⁵⁸ Louise A. Jackson, *Women Police: Gender, Welfare and Surveillance in the Twentieth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), 36.

only subject to the constraints of masculine police culture but to the structures that, in reality, denied them full employment equity as police officers. Without options to help them resolve tensions that they were experiencing when they resisted an NCO, it is not surprising that so many women felt they were under siege in the workplace.

Despite ongoing talk of forming a union, amending employment practices, and updating policies, conventional methods of leadership persisted in the RCMP as the decades passed. As a result, keeping an NCO happy with one's job performance remained essential for future transfers, promotions, and opportunities to work in specialized fields such as forensics or plainclothes investigative work. The annual performance evaluation system was the measuring stick used by the RCMP to determine the future career of every junior police officer. While performance ratings measured individual capability and identified leadership potential, they also had the potential for abuse. The future career prospects of female Mounties were particularly dependent on the goodwill and fairness of their NCOs in assessing their job performance. If female Mounties challenged abusive treatment, if their supervisors did not like the idea of women in the RCMP, or if women refused sexual advances from NCOs, they were marked lower than their male colleagues, rendering them less competitive for advancement.¹⁵⁹

The RCMP's performance evaluation system also had a significant impact on male police officers who feared retaliation for speaking out when they witnessed a female Mountie being abused by an NCO or her job performance being unfairly rated. Although women like Evans had the sympathy of her male peers while she was being harassed, "They knew enough and they evaluated it enough to say, 'I can't step in and up for her, protect her, you know, show solidarity with her because then he'll turn on me.' So you had a lot of sympathy [from men] but it only went so far."¹⁶⁰ Junior male officers also feared losing promotions, pay increases, or transfers if they did not cooperate with a supervisor. The system encouraged their silence which only served to reinforce the power NCOs held over them. Informally, male officers were also subject to forms of retaliation for speaking out such as gossip, shunning, being labeled a trouble maker, and a host of operational restrictions such as cancelled leave or being assigned poor shifts.

¹⁵⁹ Denise Bell, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

¹⁶⁰ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

Research has shown that an awareness of the maltreatment of female police officers has also led to stress and burnout in male police officers. This negative outcome speaks to the “power of police masculinity” whereby an emotional response by men to events such as harassment stigmatizes them as weak.¹⁶¹ All male Mounties were expected to exhibit solidarity in their opposition to women, and loyalty to the masculinist culture that underpinned the RCMP was viewed as paramount. It was a value instilled in all RCMP officers as early as their training in Depot, as we have seen. NCOs understood their position of power over junior officers, both male and female, and they exploited that power to pressure women into transferring or resigning.

Supervisors in municipal police departments also exerted their power over female police officers through the annual performance evaluation process. Liz Davies, the first female constable hired by a small city in British Columbia, believed that she was never promoted because she challenged every one of her annual assessments: “I had one staff sergeant take out a bottle of White Out and just go like this [waving her hand] over the whole assessment. It was nonsense what they used to put in my assessments.”¹⁶² As time progressed, Davies’s performance evaluations became more personal. For example, they noted that she was spending too much time speaking to her children on the telephone during shifts. “They couldn’t fault me at my job because my arrest record was fine [and] I had no complaints [made] against me. I was very diplomatic [with people in my community]. Everything was fine. I guess that was the problem.”¹⁶³ To Davies, a single mother, the complaint about her telephone calls implied that because she was a mother, she was unqualified to be a police officer, despite the fact that her male counterparts routinely telephoned their children during the course of a shift. She also felt that the comment implied that her police work made her an unfit mother. It was a no-win situation for her.

In the RCMP, official employment equity policies were viewed by many male police officers as a politically correct initiative that had been forced on police departments as a result of demands being made by Canadian feminists. Yet, employment equity initiatives were one way to ensure that police forces were more

¹⁶¹ Kurtz, “Controlled Burn,” 235.

¹⁶² Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.

¹⁶³ Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.

representative of the communities they policed, not just a political manoeuvre to placate vocal minority groups.¹⁶⁴ The implementation of affirmative action policies was not a new practice in Canada by the time women were being hired by the RCMP. Similar programs dated back to World War II, when returning (male) veterans had been given preferential treatment for work in the public service as a gesture of gratitude by the Canadian government. And when Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau initiated a policy to increase the number of francophone Canadians in the federal public service, he established an affirmative action program that promoted biculturalism.¹⁶⁵ While legal scholars credit affirmative action initiatives as the “best known systemic remedy”¹⁶⁶ to discriminatory treatment within organizations, some of the RCMP’s commanding officers were lukewarm to their implementation because they viewed the role of the RCMP as unusual compared to that of other federal civil service departments. D/Commr. T.S. Venner, in a memorandum to the commissioner on 25 June 1986, wrote:

We seem to be always trying to rationalize our Recruiting/deployment of Female members up against urgent Federal government Affirmative Action programmes aimed at the employment of more women in the Public Service, equal pay for work of equal value, increases in the number of women at senior management levels, etc. That is all well and good; these are laudable objectives. But we must not lose sight of the unique role of the RCMP within that government framework and the simple fact that because of the nature of police duties it may never be possible to move as fast or as far as it is for other departments. I think it is time we accepted that and defended it instead of hiding from and denying it.¹⁶⁷

Venner’s stance revealed that the highest levels of the RCMP continued to view police work as a masculine endeavour twelve years after women had been admitted into police ranks. His resistance to the timely implementation of affirmative action initiatives, and his call for a defense of that resistance, was predicated on an understanding of the RCMP as Canada’s iconic police force, an exceptional status compared to other branches of the civil service. Ironically, the deputy commissioner did not anticipate that women in the

¹⁶⁴ Solicitor General of Canada, “Women in Policing: Myths & Realities” (1993), RCMP file GM 448-36. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

¹⁶⁵ Chabursky, “The Employment Equity Act,” 321.

¹⁶⁶ Chabursky, “The Employment Equity Act,” 321.

¹⁶⁷ D/Commr. T.S. Venner to the Commr., memorandum, 25 June 1986. Author copy.

RCMP would resign at double the rate of male Mounties, effectively stalling the force's affirmative action initiatives.¹⁶⁸

Many female RCMP officers resisted affirmative action policies, too, albeit for different reasons than the deputy commissioner's. Pam Osborne recalled Commr. Norman Inkster speaking to her troop at Depot in 1987, just before they graduated. The commissioner advised her troop of the RCMP's new policy that afforded female Mounties access to positions as instructors in Depot for the first time in RCMP history. The positions were advertised within the RCMP as open only to women. It was a policy that caused a lot of controversy within the police force because it prevented men from applying as instructors. According to Osborne:

[The positions] had been advertised as female only – males need not apply, which sent a whole huge ripple through the Force. Inkster came out and actually said [to us] you know, "I want to know how you feel about this. I'm not going to change my mind but I want to know how you feel about this." We said, basically, thank you for making our lives worse than what we already had because now you've just reiterated again that women in the force [need special consideration]. . . . We felt that if you wanted females [in those positions] fine, but it should be the best candidate at the time. . . . The issue should be who's the best candidate to do the job.¹⁶⁹

The RCMP was aware that women were leaving the police force in growing numbers and sought solutions to stem the exodus by offering opportunities for advancement in sections that had, to that point, remained closed to women. A 1995 audit of the RCMP's employment equity program found that of the "617 women who joined the RCMP between 1975 and 1985, 43 per cent left. That compares with 24 per cent of the 5,149 men who chose the Mounties as a career" during the same period.¹⁷⁰ But the RCMP remained focused on increasing the number of women being hired and offering opportunities to those who remained to counteract the steady stream of resignations, rather than critically reviewing the structural and organizational processes that contributed to the problem.

¹⁶⁸ "Female Mounties Quit at Twice the Rate of Men: Audit of the Force's Employment-Equity Program Shows that Nearly Half of Female Applicants Fail Fitness Test," *The Globe and Mail*, 12 August 1996.

¹⁶⁹ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

¹⁷⁰ Solicitor General of Canada, "Women in Policing: Myths & Realities."

As women advanced up the chain of command within the RCMP, those who eventually received commissions often faced accusations of tokenism and preferential treatment. The women interviewed for this study who achieved a high rank took exception to the argument that they were promoted because of their gender. Louise Ferguson, who eventually received a commission during her long career with the RCMP, commented:

I've worked really hard to continue to make sure I've deserved to continue holding the positions I've had. People will say that "she's got that because she's female." I think it's one of the worst things we can do to one another, that affirmative-action stuff. Because we deserve these kinds of jobs and if you still continue to look for women in roles, then you take away their ability to totally own each one of those achievements they've had. Even at this stage of the game, I work hard. There are people that, I know when I meet them, they believe I'm the token female. . . . That bugs me because I don't think that's true. I worked really hard and I did good stuff, and still continue to do good stuff. I'm not saying I'm better than anyone else, but I'm totally qualified. I really resist pushing for employment equity and all of these things.¹⁷¹

As Ferguson's account illustrates, the issue was complex. Affirmative action initiatives did aid women's advancement, advances that may not have taken place without such policies. But for female Mounties, affirmative action was seen as a detriment because male police officers assumed that all women needed the initiatives to advance their careers. It was a critique that eliminated the agency of the women and minimized their hard work and their ability to advance their own careers. Narrators such as Ferguson insisted that their talents and efforts should not be dismissed out-of-hand. Despite the successes of women in the force, many men in the RCMP continued to view affirmative action as facilitating the promotion of unqualified women who were taking positions away from men. Affirmative action only reinforced arguments of difference within police culture, leaving little room for the renegotiation of gender.

In the long run, affirmative action policies did afford women in the RCMP more career opportunities than they might have had otherwise. But the slow implementation of these policies did little to help female Mounties in the field in the 1970s and 80s, who were attempting to cope with the attitudinal barriers of their supervisors. Cherise

¹⁷¹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

Marchand's example is a case in point. Marchand, a French Canadian who did not have the benefit of language training following her time at Depot, was the first woman posted to a mid-sized detachment in a western province in the late 1970s. The first few years were difficult for Marchand, who had to learn English in addition to adjusting to her new community and police work. Marchand recalled: "I was told, um, before I actually set foot on the other side of the gate at the detachment that the detachment commander did not want any female working for him. Right there, I had a strike, or a couple of strikes [being French Canadian and a woman], against me before I even started."¹⁷² Marchand had difficulty writing reports in English, but she did not receive training to relieve the administrative problems she was having: "They didn't give me any systems. . . . If it was not something they liked they just . . . took the red pen and just circled things they didn't like and shipped it back for me to re-write it, without any guidance."¹⁷³ After eight months, Marchand's NCO was transferred and a new supervisor arrived. He, too, harassed Marchand:

At that point it didn't matter what I did. . . . [I]f I handed him a file, and if there was one page number that was missing, they'd call me. Like, we worked a twelve-hour shift. I'd get home at 7:00 [am] . . . [and] by the time I'd get to bed, probably 8:00, 8:30, well they'd call me at 9:00 [am]. Call me back [into] the office right there and then to put a page number when the other ones were numbered. I mean, if it was on the bottom right corner and it was on the top or something, that's not where they wanted it. So I mean, it didn't matter. . . . The boss complained, obviously, and that went to, um, that went to the sub-division [headquarters].¹⁷⁴

The over-enforcement of rules was an oppressive tactic designed to elicit an emotional response from Marchand, one used to further justify complaints about her supposed inability to handle even the most routine police tasks. After four years of constant harassment, a male constable finally confided to Marchand, "You don't deserve this and I won't do anything to help them. But just so you know, they're out there to get you."¹⁷⁵ This male constable was wary of retaliation by the NCO and the potential damage to his

¹⁷² Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008. After 1978, French Canadians were sent to Ottawa, Ontario, for English language instruction following their training at Depot and prior to being posted to predominantly English-speaking communities.

¹⁷³ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

¹⁷⁴ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October, 2008.

career if he advocated on behalf of Marchand. His reaction was an acknowledgement that male members of the rank-and-file were also vulnerable to an NCO's abuse of power. It was a paramilitary approach to management that frequently crushed any pressure for reform that might have been exerted from the lower ranks.

Events suddenly took a fortuitous turn for Marchand, just when she was on the verge of resigning. When investigators at sub-division headquarters required a French-speaking officer to help them solve a major crime, Marchand was sent to work on the investigation temporarily. According to Marchand, her NCO initially thought that officers at sub-division "would [finally] see that I was not worth anything and they would can me," so convinced was he of her unsuitability as a member of the RCMP.¹⁷⁶ After a month's time, however, she was still working there. The detachment NCO wrote to commanding officers at sub-division stating that Marchand should be fired, claiming that she did not follow orders when he asked her to write traffic tickets. He insisted that she only wrote two tickets over an extended period of time, and since she was not much good for any other type of police work, she should lose her position. When officers at sub-division asked Marchand if the accusations about her work standards were true, and whether she could disprove her NCO's claims, she took action. Marchand returned to her detachment that weekend, when the NCO was not in the office, and made copies of every ticket she had issued since being assigned to traffic duties from the files. When Marchand produced the photocopies of almost 200 tickets the following Monday, the commanding officer at sub-division arranged for an immediate staffing interview for her, and by Friday of that week she was transferred to another detachment. For Marchand, despite the fact that commanding officers at sub-division headquarters only believed her claims after she had provided proof that her NCO was lying, her transfer was a "life saver."¹⁷⁷

The NCO, however, remained at the detachment, where he continued to abuse junior police officers, male and female, without consequences for years afterward. Unfortunately, the RCMP's response was to move the recipient of an NCOs abuse to diffuse the situation, rather than discipline the offending supervisor. The paramilitary structure of the RCMP traditionally privileged the words and actions of NCOs over those

¹⁷⁶ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

¹⁷⁷ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

in the lower ranks, protecting higher-ranking officers from accusations of a failure of command. Few NCOs wanted their abuse exposed, and fewer still wanted the leadership ability of their commanding officers called into question as a result of their activities. After all, NCOs were also subject to annual performance evaluations that were written by their commanding officers; they were just as interested in protecting their careers as lower-ranking police officers were.

The emotional abuse that Marchand endured from her NCO fit an on-going pattern of disrespect and unfair treatment of female officers. Researchers list verbal threats, focusing on negative aspects of work performance, setting up a person to fail, lying to an employee, manipulating or controlling an employee, making non-legitimate work requests, teasing, ridiculing, and name-calling as emotionally abusive behaviour in the workplace.¹⁷⁸ Based on this list, it is evident that Marchand was exposed to high levels of harassment. Her experience stands out as a particularly extreme example compared to the other oral history interviews that were conducted for this study. However, Marchand was able to fight the pressure to resign. Today, she is still a member of the RCMP, a testament to her inner strength and determination to stick with the job under extremely adverse circumstances. She currently holds the rank of staff sergeant, an NCO.

However, it is little wonder that some female Mounties felt that they were in the midst of a battle for survival. Other women who were interviewed experienced similar forms of harassment, suggesting that their examples are representative of the experiences many female Mounties were forced to contend with. Allison Palmer had difficulties with supervisors, too. Palmer recalled that her supervisor would not talk to her personally during her first six months. Several years later, Palmer had the opportunity to ask her former NCO why he had ignored her at the time. He responded, "I couldn't, because if I paid attention to you, the guys would have got upset" and interpreted it as preferential treatment.¹⁷⁹ Although Palmer accepted this explanation, the refusal to speak to a junior female officer was an extreme response from a supervisor and demonstrated neglect of her well-being. It illustrates the lengths some NCOs went to make female Mounties feel uncomfortable in the workplace, and their failure to see it as

¹⁷⁸ Andrews, "Stress in Women Police," 6.

¹⁷⁹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

harassment, even years later. Perhaps more importantly, it demonstrates the extent to which masculinized police culture had been absorbed by the men of the RCMP, so much so that even NCOs felt pressured to conform. Palmer also worked with another NCO who once questioned her about what she would do if she had to go to the bathroom, suggesting that since bathrooms were not always available for police officers while on the road, she would be unable to function on patrol. Palmer replied, "Squatter's rights!" to make the point that she did not necessarily need a bathroom, a comment that abruptly ended their conversation.¹⁸⁰ The fact that the question was asked at all illustrates how male officers assumed that female biology made them poor police officers. The assumption that all women required special accommodations to urinate implied that the female body was unsuitable for police work.

Palmer also endured continuous name-calling from her supervisor at her second posting. He frequently called her "Grandma" because her hair was starting to turn grey. Although younger constables sometimes called her "Mom" because she was older than they were, the NCO's demeaning tone of voice, continuous name-calling, and the fact that he did not refer to older male officers who were greying as "Grandpa," adversely affected Palmer, who experienced these moments as emotional abuse. Further, she felt that she could not complain about the harassment because her supervisor was friendly with the commanding officer, and that her complaint would not be addressed. Palmer turned to the DSRP whom she asked to advocate on her behalf and help resolve the situation. But nothing came of her meetings with the representative, who found his own efforts were blocked because the NCO "had too many connections." She finally sought the advice of a psychologist, who helped her understand that the source of her stress was her supervisor's attitude toward women in policing.¹⁸¹

Palmer was not alone; in all, there were ten police officers, male and female, who transferred out of this detachment at approximately the same time because of this NCO's harassment of lower-ranking officers. It was an example of the power politics that enabled some supervisors to exert complete control over the men and women under their supervision. Not only that, but commanding officers were sometimes in collusion with their NCOs. It is clear in Palmer's case that commanding officers worked to block

¹⁸⁰ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

¹⁸¹ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

complaints, probably in an effort to stem accusations about a failure of their command. As a result, the harassment tactics employed by NCOs was made possible by the hierarchical rank structure of the RCMP. Harassment of female officers stemmed from an equation of the arrival of women with reform and the modification of police culture, something not many commanders were interested in implementing. As a result, few women expected the organization to defend their workplace rights.

The gendered attitudes of supervisors toward female police officers were common in other Canadian police departments, reinforcing the idea that the linkage of masculinity with police work was widespread. Municipal police officer Liz Davies recalled that her staff sergeant was “bound and determined” to get her to resign. She remembered that the detachment “had a coffee room downstairs, the constables’ coffee room. The staff sergeant wouldn’t let me in it. At first, when I was first hired that was okay. I’d go down there, have my lunch, have my coffee. Then he decided, that’s it, I wasn’t gonna go in there anymore . . . and I wasn’t allowed to cross the threshold. Eventually, he had to give in because the union found out about this and they said, ‘You know, you can’t do this sort of thing.’” Although the union officially intervened on her behalf, the staff sergeant found alternative ways to pressure Davies. Finally, the mayor of the city stepped in when he heard about the problems that Davies was experiencing with her supervisors:

He found out about some of the things that were happening to me in that first five months. And I wasn’t sworn in after six months, I was sworn in after five months. He said, “I have had it with what they are doing to you and I won’t put up with it any longer.” He hauled me over [to his office in the same building] and I was sworn in then. It was disgraceful, what they would do to me. I don’t know how, to this day, if I wasn’t such a strong person, I wouldn’t have been able to put up with it.¹⁸²

The intervention of the mayor reflects the variety of attitudes toward female police officers that Canadian men adopted. While some civilian men responded to female police officers with physical force, as we have seen, others were less threatened by shifting gender relations and worked to integrate women into the occupation. Whether this mayor was an advocate for women’s equality or whether his concern for Davies was

¹⁸² Liz Davies, interview with author, 17 July 2008.

motivated by paternalism is not clear. Nevertheless, he chose to make a positive statement regarding women in policing by intervening on her behalf in a very official and public way. In doing so, he exercised his political authority over the police force by sending them the message that he was determined to make the force more representative of the community they policed.

In the RCMP, there also existed a variety of attitudes toward women. Some male Mounties were cognizant of shifts in gender relations taking place in Canada and connected this change with the difficulties women were having in gaining acceptance in the RCMP. One supervisor suggested that there “should be a workshop of female members to assess their role. Evaluate their experiences to assist all levels of management to become more knowledgeable as to the female role in policework and society.”¹⁸³ This supervisor identified some of the problems as originating with the gendered attitudes of management, connecting them to predominant attitudes about women in Canadian society. His response indicates that not all supervisors were opposed to the integration of women as members of the RCMP. Indeed, several women interviewed for this research commented that they had very supportive supervisors who also protected them at various points in their careers. Louise Ferguson’s first staff sergeant was “an old dyed-in-the-wool, wonderful guy” who called her into his office just before she went to work her first graveyard shift after eight months of service. She recalled their conversation:

He said, “I hear you’re working your first graveyard shift by yourself tonight.” And I said, “Yes.” And he goes, “Does that scare you?” And I go, “No.” “It scares the hell outta me” he says. . . . “Don’t be a hero. There isn’t a guy here that wouldn’t call for backup if they needed it. So don’t think you’re any different and don’t be afraid to call for some help if you need it. If you can’t get anybody else, you call me.” Of course, we didn’t have portable [radios] back then either. So you had to hope that there was a guard on [duty at the detachment] so that you had someone to radio to.¹⁸⁴

Marianne Robson also remembered that her NCOs and peers were also “very, very protective because they didn’t want me to get hurt. . . . I can say that throughout my

¹⁸³ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 106.

¹⁸⁴ Louise Ferguson, 9 November 2006.

whole career . . . I kept my nose to the grindstone, I did what I was supposed to be doing, didn't raise a big fuss. . . . I just did my job and kept my nose clean. Didn't try to raise any kind of issues."¹⁸⁵ Robson's comment, although a positive assessment of the men she worked with in the RCMP, is also revealing. There was an obvious cost to women for raising issues and questioning procedures. Her reluctance to cause a fuss suggests that there was an unspoken understanding between her and her male colleagues, one that resulted in a more positive work experience for her but was paid for with her silence on gender issues.

As women gained seniority and length of service in the RCMP, they eventually had access to NCO ranks. The first woman was promoted to the rank of corporal in 1981.¹⁸⁶ Shelly Evans was wary of her first female NCO because she did not have a "good reputation. The guys were always mumbling about her, this and that." Ironically, when the female NCO heard that Evans was being assigned to her watch, "she didn't want me either. She said, 'I don't want any more girls on my watch. One's enough, and it's me.'"¹⁸⁷ The response of both women to working with each other reveals the extent to which women sometimes adopted the gendered attitudes espoused by their male counterparts. It also reveals the unpredictability of gender in police culture. But to their mutual surprise, their working relationship "just clicked." Not only did Evans gain the trust and support of her female NCO, but she learned something about her own attitudes toward women in the RCMP. According to Evans:

Part of the reason why [the female NCO] had this bad reputation is because she wouldn't put up with crap. And I realized, I thought, here it is late in my career . . . and I've just learned this lesson that I am part of the perpetuation of these stereotypes, not stereotypes, these labels. Oh, everybody says, "She's a disaster as a corporal. Can't believe she got the rank." . . . [A]nd then you go there and you realize she's a damn good NCO. She's the first one to say, "I don't really know all the aspects of the job, so if I don't know something, then I'm gonna ask." She was an

¹⁸⁵ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹⁸⁶ "First Female Milestones," <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/rrecruiting-recrutement/fem/hist-eng.html> [accessed 21 March 2012].

¹⁸⁷ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

excellent people person. She's a manager. That's what an NCO should be.¹⁸⁸

Evans was surprised to learn that women were not always united by their gender in the RCMP. Her experience demonstrates the degree to which female Mounties also bought into the gendered discourses about the abilities and role of women in the RCMP. In this case, the unpredictability of gender worked to reinforce the power differentials between male and female police officers. Despite their initial wariness, Evans and her NCO became friends. They are still friends today.

Conclusion

The operational experiences of women in the RCMP in the 1970s and 80s were complicated by understandings of gender in operation in broader Canadian society. The oral histories reveal that responses to female Mounties varied between groups of Canadians, both inside and outside the police force. The resistance of Mountie wives to women in the RCMP, for example, demonstrated that, like their husbands and many Canadians at the time, wives understood gender as fixed and unchanging. Those wives who exhibited anxiety over the arrival of women viewed them as competition for the husbands' affections and often critiqued them for disturbing the conventional gender ideals that they embraced. The interview material also reveals RCMP spouses responded to female Mounties in a variety of ways. While one wife threatened to divorce her husband if he worked with a female police officer, other wives engaged in gossip or shunning tactics to register their resistance; still others were not opposed to female constables but established life-long friendships with them. There is little doubt, however, that many wives complicated the work of female Mounties as they attempted to integrate into detachment and community life.

Male members of the Canadian public responded to the arrival of female RCMP officers in a variety of gendered ways. In the 1970s, some men supported the presence of women in the RCMP by intervening on their behalf or by coming to their aid on the street. But female RCMP officers were an unknown factor for most civilian men who, like the men of the RCMP, understood police authority in terms of violent confrontation. The

¹⁸⁸ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

physicality and aggression that underwrote police authority were characteristics of masculinity that were also valued by men in the communities the RCMP policed. Accordingly, some men did not hesitate to use physical violence in their dealings with female Mounties. More often than not, however, combative males were torn between engaging a female police officer in a physical confrontation and risking being bested by her during an altercation. Although many women met physical confrontation and violence with physical force when called upon to do so, many used negotiation as an alternative approach, resulting in more peaceful outcomes and minimizing physical danger. Their alternative response to physical confrontation allowed them to define their work on their own terms and positioned them as agents of change within the RCMP. In the process, female RCMP officers destabilized the idea that effective policing required physical size and strength, establishing a new standard for policing while renegotiating understandings of femininity and disrupting the masculine image of the RCMP.

The alternative approaches that women introduced received a mixed reception from the men of the RCMP. Indeed, female Mounties were unprepared for the level of sexism that characterized their daily working lives. Male supervisors in particular actively opposed the integration of women and worked to neutralize their power as figures of authority. Many NCOs feared the feminization of the occupation and engaged in harassment tactics to reinforce the masculine values that defined police culture. They did not wait for the women to prove themselves but began to exert pressure on them as soon as they arrived at their postings, suggesting that their opposition had more to do with gendered beliefs about women in policing than the abilities of women to do the work. Many NCOs did not hesitate to capitalize on the power differentials they enjoyed to oppose women in the RCMP, and they emerged as the chief conveyors of discrimination.

The stressful work environment that many female Mounties experienced was complicated by the structural foundations of the RCMP that facilitated the systemic harassment of women. Several of the accounts of harassment that surfaced during the interviews suggest that it was representative of many female Mounties' working lives. Further, the consistency between accounts regarding the forms the harassment took suggests that a culture of masculinity, rather than women's incompetency, was at the root of their difficulty in integrating. Deference rather than overt resistance remained a primary expectation for all junior police officers, creating a space for supervisors and

commanders to abuse their power without consequences to individual harassers. By ignoring or preventing women's claims from proceeding further, many men working in the upper echelons of the hierarchy protected each other by preventing any knowledge about a failure of their command from emerging and circulating within the RCMP.

Male Mounties in the field who witnessed the harassment of their female colleagues often remained silent for fear of retaliation from the same supervisors. Those NCOs who were engaged in harassment tactics expected all male Mounties to be united in their opposition to women, and they anticipated that their dominance would eventually force women out of the occupation. Any resistance to supervisors' decisions resulted in retaliation, calling into question a man's loyalty to the image and reputation of the RCMP and to policing as masculine work. In this way, men and women were regulated differently in the RCMP. The interviews revealed that although men were also subjected to harassment, and while some undoubtedly failed to meet the normative standards that were expected of them, women were singled out because of gendered beliefs about their biological difference. Notions of biological difference were used to justify women's inequality and to maintain the systems of meaning and power that confronted the women of the RCMP.

Despite their best efforts, women in the RCMP continued to be viewed as unequal to achieving masculine standards of police authority. Few people, including, at times, the women themselves, could envision that it was possible to be both equal and different. Three of the narrators in this study described the importance of maintaining conventional femininity even though they were working at a "man's job." Their statements demonstrate that female Mounties, like their male counterparts, were creatures of their times who were influenced by socially constructed notions of gender in operation in wider Canadian society. Their struggle to come to terms with concepts of difference without subordination, and their desire to establish themselves as authority figures on their own terms, emerged time and again in the oral accounts. It was a dynamic that added a level of complexity to understanding the contradictions that often characterized women's entrance into an occupation that equated authority with masculinity. For almost all of the women who were interviewed for this study, their operational experiences resulted in a sense of both challenge and embattlement as they struggled to come to terms with the power differentials that were in play in the RCMP.

That sense of embattlement had additional dimensions, as the next chapter demonstrates.

Chapter 4.

Sex and the Female Police Body

Women make it difficult to assimilate if they like to sleep around. If that is not a priority then the community accepts them as a member – depending on their job reputation. We have to realize that we are on display 24 hours a day.

Female RCMP Officer, Anonymous Survey Respondent, 1986

The harassment of female Mounties in the workplace, as we have seen, was a result of the close connection between the image of the RCMP and the masculine ethos of police culture. Harassment as an acceptable form of opposition to women in the RCMP was enabled by the actual structure of the police force, allowing the practice to continue despite official policies to the contrary. Many female police officers came to accept the idea that harassment was to be expected because it was a part of working in a male-dominated occupation. Indeed, in the 1970s and 80s, harassment and bullying were considered a necessary part of police training, viewed as a toughening up that prepared recruits for their potential verbal and physical abuse from civilians. Learning to ignore or deal with harassment rationally and without resorting to official complaint procedures was seen as part of professional development for both male and female police officers.¹ Following their graduation from Depot, many female Mounties assumed that they would gain acceptance and respect from their male colleagues if they responded to harassment and other difficult situations in ways that met male expectations.

Once they arrived at their first postings, however, assimilation into the rank-and-file proved to be much more complicated. Concepts of appropriate feminine and masculine behaviour frequently clashed as women attempted to integrate while renegotiating normative standards of policing. Further, female police officers found that

¹ Jackson, *Women Police*, 36-37.

they were regulated differently from their male counterparts in the RCMP. From an official perspective, male and female Mounties were governed by the same rules and regulations that stipulated that they were to maintain what the RCMP considered to be a reputable character in the communities they policed. As an organ of the state, the RCMP had been traditionally charged with regulating the sexual practices of Canadians through the enforcement of laws against sodomy and prostitution, to name just two. Accordingly, the RCMP's regulation of the sexuality of its own members was meant to give the appearance that they were morally qualified to police the sexual "crimes" that they were charged with combating.² Because the RCMP patrolled heterosexuality in society, heterosexual masculinity was defined as normative for male Mounties and linked directly to the police work of the force. It is not surprising, then, that compulsory heterosexuality dominated the institution's culture.

This chapter argues that women of the RCMP experienced this regulation differently from their male peers in the 1970s and 80s. Although women were officially governed by the same regulations regarding sexual morality as their male peers, female Mounties were subject to additional methods of control that reproduced men's power over the female police body through the monitoring of their sexuality. This discussion begins with a look at the ways in which the sexuality of female Mounties was scrutinized to ensure that heteronormativity continued to dominate in police culture. Male police officers engaged in tactics such as the spread of gossip and rumours that speculated about the sex lives and sexual orientation of female Mounties in an effort to undermine the credibility of women as police officers. It was not only a strategy of opposing their presence in the workplace, but also a means of reinforcing beliefs about women's inherent sexual orientation toward men.³ Consequently, the first women to be hired were monitored for signs of appropriately heterosexual, and feminine, behaviour. But the issue was more complex and, as we will see, double standards soon complicated the working lives of women in the RCMP.

² Mary Bernstein and Constance Kostelac, "Lavender and Blue: Attitudes about Homosexuality and Behavior Toward Lesbians and Gay Men Among Police Officers," *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice* 18:302 (2002): 307.

³ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5:4 (Summer 1980): 633.

Sections on marriage and motherhood will follow to illustrate how ill-prepared the RCMP was for the eventuality that female Mounties would marry and have children. Oral history material reveals the ramifications that the RCMP's delay in developing adequate marriage and maternity policies had for the personal and professional lives of women in the police force. The absence of a maternity leave policy, in particular, was a form of neglect that served to reinforce moralistic and gendered standards concerning motherhood and work. It was an oversight that actually emphasized, and patrolled, the gendered boundaries that were at work within the police force. It reminded women of their transgressive behaviour and their subordinate role in the RCMP. The experiences of lesbian Mounties are also discussed to illustrate how constructions of heteronormativity silenced the sexual orientation of women in the RCMP. For these women, their jobs depended on their appearing appropriately heterosexual during decades when gay police officers were not out and lesbianism was not openly discussed in the police force. In a workplace where heterosexual women who resisted the sexual overtures of their colleagues were pejoratively labeled as dykes, lesbians understood heterosexuality as a dominant trait in police culture that was non-negotiable. Consequently, lesbians were further marginalized within the organization, especially when their sexual orientation was discovered.⁴

The final section deals with sexual harassment. Since women were viewed as physically and emotionally unable to meet the rigorous demands of policing, sexual harassment was a means of emphasizing their unsuitability while increasing men's sense of superiority as police officers. Accordingly, the female police body was singled out for particular attention, scrutiny that objectified the women and minimized their power and authority as police officers. Female sexuality was informally regulated through sexual harassment in an effort to reassert the dominance and control of men, not only over women, but over the police force that they feared was in the process of feminizing. It quickly emerged as the most direct and effective way to exclude female Mounties from police culture. It was also used to create a hostile work environment designed to force women out of the RCMP, making sexual harassment an issue of power rather than

⁴ This was happening to all LGBTQ persons in the period.

sexual desire.⁵ The reader should consider that given the importance of heterosexuality to the RCMP during the 1970s and 80s, the oral histories of the narrators whose accounts appear below are focused exclusively on male to female sexual harassment. As a result, alternative forms of sexual harassment such as same-sex or female to male harassment are not explored here. It is important to note that the dominant memory of the narrators who discussed the issue of sexual harassment is one of challenge and survival. These negative experiences emerged time and again in the interview material and, as a result, dominate the following analysis. Also, even though the practice was pervasive within the RCMP during the 1970s and 80s, it is important to remember that not all men in the RCMP engaged in the practice of sexually harassing their female colleagues.

Sexuality and the Single Female Mountie

When Janet Porter, a member of Troop 17, and her recruit boyfriend prepared to graduate from Depot in 1975, both hoped to be posted to nearby detachments in the same province, where they could continue their relationship. At the time, RCMP policy stipulated that new recruits could request preferred postings to specific provinces. Consideration was also given to requests for postings to a home province, although the final decision rested with the RCMP and there was no guarantee that recruits' preferences would be accommodated. Janet Porter recalled that "when it came time for us to get our postings, [my boyfriend] and I had both spoken to the people doing the placements, and it seemed like we were going to be together." Her boyfriend, who graduated just before Porter, received his preferred posting in British Columbia. But Porter, who also requested a posting in British Columbia, was posted to another province. For Porter, "That was the beginning of the end for me. We tried to maintain our relationship . . . but it was just too far. They didn't want that to happen, that members would marry. That's the impression I got. I thought it was quite cruel. I thought it was deceptive because, ah, it sure didn't help me in my career."⁶ Since staffing officers were aware of Porter's relationship with the male recruit, and since some other members of

⁵ E. Marlies Ott, "Effects of the Male-Female Ratio at Work: Policewomen and Male Nurses," *Psychology of Women Quarterly* 13:1 (1989): 44.

⁶ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

Troop 17 were posted to British Columbia at the time, Porter was of the opinion that the RCMP deliberately stationed her in a different province.

The RCMP clearly did not want to establish a precedent of accommodating recruits who became romantically involved during training. The abolition of the regulation prohibiting marriage for the first five years of service and the decision to hire married men and women for the first time in 1974 threatened to undermine the power wielded by commanding officers over the rank-and-file. As a result, the RCMP directly interfered in Porter's personal life by ending her relationship with her boyfriend through its transfer system. In Porter's case, her posting signaled the RCMP's intention to continue to exercise control over the personal lives of Mounties in much the same way as it had been doing for a hundred years. Unlike male police officers, however, the RCMP intended to regulate the sexuality of female Mounties, especially the women of Troop 17. As the first women in the RCMP, they were entering the field under the watchful eye of the public and the media. Their unmarried status might have reflected poorly on the RCMP if Porter had been posted near her boyfriend and their relationship continued – challenging the ideal of heterosexual marriage that was linked to the idealized image of the RCMP.

The RCMP continued to manage Porter's personal life following her arrival at her first posting. She recalled that some members at her first detachment attempted to restrict whom she socialized with during her non-working hours. Porter befriended a woman in the community who, like others in the community, facilitated the arrival of their first female Mountie by helping her to find an apartment and furniture. But because the woman's sons were known to the local police after they had gotten into trouble during some parties, the men at the detachment did not approve of Porter's associating with their mother socially. "I was very unhappy. There were restrictions upon me regarding who I could hang around with and they gave me a really hard time."⁷ Porter grew lonely and eventually resigned after one year of service. She paid \$500.00 to the RCMP to purchase her discharge.⁸ Reflecting back on her time in the RCMP, Porter commented

⁷ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

⁸ Recruits were required to enlist for five years in 1974. If they resigned before fulfilling the five-year commitment, they had to purchase their discharge to pay back what the RCMP had invested in them during training. At that time, recruits did not have to pay for their training, room, board, uniform, or kit while at Depot.

on her naïveté: “As I look back, I really should have pursued other options [within the RCMP instead of resigning]. Because, being the first women in the RCMP, I don’t think all of that publicity would have been great, you know. That one [of the first women is] quitting after a year. I think they would have had to accommodate me. And I didn’t realize that I could have had that opportunity.”⁹ Attempts to manage Porter’s personal life, coupled with the failure to be posted near her boyfriend, created a level of isolation that resulted in her decision to end her policing career.

Loneliness in isolated or rural detachments was a significant problem for single female Mounties. The policy of isolating recruits by assigning them to provinces away from their family and friends was deeply entrenched in the paramilitary culture of the RCMP by 1974. The policy, although it fluctuated over the years, ensured that police officers relied on each other for social interaction rather than civilians. Researchers Linden and Minch found that the RCMP’s mandate to police rural areas created problems for female Mounties in terms of morale, socialization, and emotional support. They discovered that the problem was “particularly acute for females who may have no friends or working associates in remote areas.”¹⁰ Socializing with male police officers and their spouses amounted to no personal life, according to Marianne Robson. She commented that “in small communities . . . you’d always go with other members to social events, to the bar or to the Legion.”¹¹ Meeting friends outside of police circles was almost impossible. Several female Mounties recalled having occasionally been excluded from social gatherings with male police officers, leaving them without male or female friendship: “You end up spending a great deal of time alone, unless you can meet someone outside the police universe.”¹² As one woman succinctly summarized their situation, “We don’t seem to fit. Male members can’t accept us or [don’t] want to socialize with us. Their wives feel we will all steal their husband. Girls in other professions look upon us as ‘libbers,’ and our own female members are scattered, so we generally all work on opposite shifts.”¹³

⁹ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

¹⁰ Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 112.

¹¹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹² Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 126-27.

¹³ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 126-27.

According to the narrators, in the 1960s and 70s women working in male-dominated institutions were considered to be “libbers” or feminists, an identifier that was often disparagingly associated with lesbianism. Consequently, it was an identity that heterosexual female Mounties sought to avoid. Indeed, none of the women who were interviewed identified themselves as feminists, even years after retirement. In the 1970s, the fear of being labeled a feminist served to censor women from advocating for their rights in the workplace and also disrupted solidarity between women.¹⁴ Gendered understandings of a woman’s appropriate role in society, isolation, and resistance to women as police officers played a significant role in the level of assimilation the women achieved, both in the community and the RCMP, while attempting to balance their own social needs.

Female Mounties quickly learned that their personal lives were under intense scrutiny from both civilians and their fellow police officers. One woman noted that “Females are still judged differently than males i.e., male member is o.k. and even respected more if he has a very active social life/lots of girlfriends, etc.; however, as we all know, females, if they go out with a number of males, are looked down on and are known to have a ‘bad reputation.’” Another commented, “In a small town everyone knows you. Females must really watch their reputation. It’s OK for guys, not for the female.”¹⁵ Supervisors also noticed that women were required to be more circumspect in their personal lives while working in small communities. Several NCOs in Stark’s survey explained that female Mounties were so novel in small communities that it was difficult for them to have a social life if they were single. According to one NCO, “Especially in small detachments females must be more careful socially than a male. Rumours travel fast when it concerns a female member.” Still another confirmed that male police officers, in addition to members of the community, were watching the women. “Female members must be more aware of their acquaintances. There is still a double standard in society today and no matter what the *Charter of Rights* states, female members will not be accepted by all male members.”¹⁶ Despite an awareness of the basic legal rights of

¹⁴ Tina O’Toole, “Moving into the Spaces Cleared by Our Sisters: Lesbian Community Activism in Ireland and Canada,” *Out of the Ivory Tower: Feminist Research for Social Change*, eds. Andrea Martinez and Meryn Stuart (Toronto: Sumach Press, 2003), 72-73.

¹⁵ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 127.

¹⁶ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 128-29.

female Mounties in the workplace, informal police culture measured the women's worthiness against a normative standard of female sexuality.

Within the RCMP, male police officers actively opposed the presence of women through the initiation and spread of gossip and rumours that speculated about their sex lives or sexual orientation. It began as early as training in Depot. As one female respondent in the Stark survey commented, "Depot teaches you 2 things: (1) that to get ahead or to be accepted you must bed with a male member, or (2) that most men have no use for female members."¹⁷ Female Mounties who engaged in sexual relations with corporals at Depot put their reputations at risk even before they arrived at their first postings. According to Margaret Watson, "if you slept with one of the instructors at Depot, you might as well quit. Your reputation would already be out there. If there is one thing about male policemen, I would say that they are vicious gossips. The woman would be labeled a slut for the rest of her service," a sexual double standard that excused the sexually provocative behaviour of the instructors, most of whom were married.¹⁸ Shelly Evans agreed, commenting that gossip in the RCMP, particularly in rural detachments "in the middle of nowhere, away from the hub," was pervasive: "Male members too, that for whatever reason, they're like a pack of chickens in a lot of ways. They find something different or wrong about somebody and they won't leave it alone. They pick, and pick, and pick. Everybody says the force has come so far. I don't think so. It's just very subtle now."¹⁹

Rumours about female recruits who were sleeping with male recruits quickly spread around Depot, and instructors were complicit in propagating the gossip. One incident in particular illustrates how corporals took the initiative to publicly shame female recruits who were sexually active. Jane Hall recalled a troop mate who was singled out for sleeping with her recruit boyfriend in an interview techniques class in 1977. During a role-play session following the lecture, the female recruit was selected to be the suspect and the instructor acted as the interrogator. He began his questioning by asking the woman how she spent her weekend. According to Hall, "We watched in shock as the instructor, who clearly knew every detail of her romantic escapade with a recruit

¹⁷ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 65.

¹⁸ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹⁹ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

boyfriend, reduced her to tears. Every detail of the weekend was exposed in what seemed like an endless and sadistic performance. . . . All the rest of us could do was to learn at the expense of my troop mate. We would have to be careful whom we dated.”²⁰ Hall’s troop mates were learning more than interview techniques during this particular class. The detailed exposure of the female recruit’s weekend with her Mountie boyfriend was a deliberate and public attack that was meant to shame and humiliate her. The message was clear: Women should control their sexuality. In this case, an NCO at Depot chose to exert his power over female Mounties by defining the circumstances under which young female recruits were to engage in sexual activity. Since this woman conducted her relationship outside the bounds of heterosexual marriage, his shaming tactic conveyed not only his moral disapproval, but his critique of women in the RCMP as disruptive to the moral image of the police force.

How did female Mounties respond to the intense scrutiny of their personal lives? A number of women interviewed for this study commented that they were concerned about their reputations. Marianne Robson was careful about whom she associated with during her non-working hours: “I learned very quickly men love to gossip. And I mean, of course I was concerned about my reputation. I mean, I was just starting out in this job and I kinda liked this job; it was kinda fun. So I wanted to make sure I could hang on to it. And keeping a good reputation was part and parcel of that.”²¹ Leslie Clark was exasperated when she found that the sexual double standard was still in operation when she started work in the field in 1987. It was not something that she wanted to waste her time thinking about, but it was an issue that she was forced to consider. She remembered, “In the early days, women had to be careful. So I was careful. I didn’t want to be branded a slut. So that was a bit of a pain. I mean, you know, god, I have to think about *this*?”²² Similarly, Shelly Evans, who was hired in 1988, found that women were held to higher moral standards than male officers. Evans remarked:

Being a single female member was definitely way harder than a single male member. You’re scrutinized in your personal life much more than a male member. Many are just waiting to find you doing something you shouldn’t. . . . If you didn’t put out [engage in heterosexual sex] you were

²⁰ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 54-55.

²¹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

²² Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

gay. If you did put out you were a slut, and it affirmed the belief [that] female members in general were only so good. Male member sleeps around, he's a man. Not the same for female members, who had to be way more careful and discreet.²³

Evans's account illustrates how male officers were watching the women for signs of immoral behaviour in an effort to judge them against the manly virtues associated with the occupation. Although women in many occupations in Canada at the time were held to the same double standard, the fact that the RCMP was charged with regulating the sexual morality of Canadians through the enforcement of laws governing sexual behaviour differentiated the police force from those other occupations. Sexual immorality was contrary to the heroic and morally upright image the RCMP wanted to promote to ensure public trust and compliance. This became especially important for the men of the RCMP, who assumed that the sexuality of female Mounties was unpredictable by nature. Further, the potential for exposure of a sexual double standard compromised the RCMP's insistence on the full equality of its female police officers and called into question its ability to fairly and equitably enforce the country's laws with respect to female civilians. The fear of exposure required the silencing of female Mounties through informal tactics such as gossip and, as we will see, sexual harassment.

As for dating civilian men in their communities, female Mounties often experienced tensions in trying to establish such relationships. One female Mountie observed the contradiction that "most men are intimidated by female members and are less likely to ask them out. Whereas most females [in the community] would jump at the change to go out with a [male] cop."²⁴ One male supervisor observed, "Females are not generally accepted as a police person. The male public has difficulty in accepting the female companionship of a police woman." One male Mountie noticed that the nature of the work was a considerable inhibitor to female police officers interested in dating men from the community: "Females have to make a stand much stronger [than male officers] between friends and the Force. It is rare for a man to quit everything and follow a female member in her career."²⁵ Female Mounties were seen as performing men's work and

²³ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

²⁴ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 127.

²⁵ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 128

thus threatening male breadwinner ideology. Relying on a woman's income or transferring with her to another community because of her work was not considered appropriately masculine. Female Mounties were generally perceived as transgressing gendered boundaries. They disrupted relations of power between men and women in their communities, and their position as figures of civic authority often intimidated male civilians who might otherwise have been interested in romantic relationships with these women.

When a woman did venture out on a date with a man from the community, word quickly spread. For Allison Palmer, the fact that her personal life was under scrutiny made it difficult to date a civilian man:

I dated. I went out with, you know, members but I also went out with people from the general public. And that was difficult, especially in a small town. I think of one incident. We happened to go to the local hotel, into the bar, the lounge, not even into the pub sort of thing. Oh, god, the next day we were getting married . . . and that was the first time we went out. We went out and had a drink.²⁶

Police work itself often interfered with Palmer's relationships. Shift work, long investigations, emergencies, and unpredictable hours, not to mention Palmer's love for the work, made it difficult for men to stay interested in pursuing a relationship with her:

I'm a workaholic. Can I put it any plainer than that? And um, you know, you'd be scheduled to be going out for dinner and a dance, whatever, and I can think of this happening [with a] sexual assault [investigation I was working on]. Well, you can't just drop it and leave. And I didn't finish until midnight, you know. Well, after a while people don't appreciate me not being available and so it was sort of a habit. As soon as you'd make big plans, there was always an investigation that came up. I didn't want to let go. Whether I maybe could have in some cases, maybe I could have. But, I mean, I worked forty-eight hours straight on one incident.²⁷

Palmer, who remained single throughout her long career, made a conscious decision to prioritize her work over dating or marriage. Her love of police work, coupled with a need to remain financially independent, contributed to her decision.

²⁶ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

²⁷ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

Marriage and Female Mounties

Not all female Mounties decided to remain single. When Ronald Morse, a constable stationed in Port Alberni, asked Donna Burns, a member of Troop 17 also stationed there, to marry him in July 1975, the RCMP was taken by surprise. In November of that year, Morse and Burns made RCMP history when they became the first Mountie couple to be married. Until 1974, when the RCMP hired married men and women for the first time, marriage was highly regulated by commanding officers, who went to considerable lengths to keep their police officers single and mobile. Operational flexibility and cost were the prime motivators. Single Mounties were paid less than their married counterparts, who earned a family wage, and it was easier to transfer them around the country on short notice. Dave Moore remembered receiving a transfer from British Columbia to northern Alberta as a single man in the 1950s. He was able to pack all of his belongings in his force-issued trunk, purchase a bus ticket, transport his trunk on the bus, and arrive at his new posting, all for \$5.75. Moore speculated, "Now if I was married, it would probably [cost] around \$5,000.00. You could move a [single] person like that and it didn't cost [the RCMP] anything."²⁸

The RCMP's marriage regulations distinguished it from other occupations, indeed from other police departments, for most of the twentieth century. While higher-ranking RCMP officers were permitted to be married, lower-ranking constables were required to sign contracts upon engagement barring them from marriage for the first five years of their service. Marriage regulations fluctuated throughout the RCMP's history, particularly during periods of low recruitment. In 1932, for instance, Mounties had to wait twelve years to marry. That year, the RCMP experienced a 74 percent increase in engagement numbers when it took over provincial policing functions in several provinces such as Manitoba and Nova Scotia.²⁹ By 1936, however, discharges outnumbered engagements and marriage waiting periods were reduced to six years.³⁰

²⁸ Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008. Also Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

²⁹ Jean Alexandra Loates, "Why I Joined the RCMP – Wives' Division," *RCMP Quarterly* 39:2 (April 1974): 18-19.

³⁰ Hewitt, *Riding to the Rescue*, 33; Loates, "Why I Joined the RCMP – Wives' Division," 18-19.

In the 1950s, RCMP constables were required to remain single for their first five years on the force, be at least twenty-four years old, and have \$2,000 in the bank before permission to marry was granted.³¹ Dave Moore, who was hired by the RCMP in 1952, had difficulty meeting these requirements following his engagement to his fiancée. Although he had the required five years of service, he did not have the \$1,200.00 in the bank he needed to demonstrate that he could support a wife. However, Moore had a “very friendly bank manager” who was willing to lend him \$1,200.00 for one day. The following day, after Moore’s commanding officer made his enquiries into Moore’s financial status, the bank manager retrieved the money from his account. Moore was granted permission to marry.³² Men like Moore informally resisted the marriage regulations imposed on them and occasionally found help from members of the community to circumvent the RCMP’s rules. By 1973, when the RCMP was considering hiring married men and women as constables, recruits were required to remain single for two years, although some married men were hired as special constables or as auxiliary police officers.³³

When members of the police force had fulfilled their contracts and were eligible to marry, they were required to meet a number of strict criteria. Jean Loats recalled the paperwork her fiancé had to submit along with his application to marry her in 1936. Jean’s age, class background, and religion were all documented, and enquiries into her character and reputation were made. Permission to marry arrived just three days before their planned wedding date.³⁴ In 1959, Cst. Mel Cheavins was denied his application to marry his fiancée Betty because she was a telephone operator. His commanding officer determined that Mounties would be better off looking for a nurse or teacher as a spouse because they had a “higher standard of education.”³⁵ His assessment represented a double standard, given that men applying to the police force at that time were only required to possess a grade eleven education. Ethnicity, class, and race were prime

³¹ Loates, “Why I Joined the R.C.M.P. – Wives’ Division,” 159-60.

³² Dave Moore, interview with author, 9 September 2008. Moore’s memory was that he needed \$1200.00 and not the \$2,000.00 other sources recalled as being the requirement in the 1950s. It may have been that he had some savings but needed the additional funds to top up his account.

³³ “Mounties May Recruit Married Men,” *The Globe and Mail*, 13 January 1973.

³⁴ Loats, “Why I Joined the RCMP – Wives’ Division,” 160.

³⁵ Lee-Knight, *When the Second Man Was a Woman*, 159.

considerations under the RCMP's marriage policies, which ensured that the police force remained dominated by men of Anglo-Canadian descent who were married to white, educated women capable of fulfilling their proper social roles and contributing to the regeneration of the white race.

All that changed in 1974 with the abolition of marriage restrictions and the recruitment of married men and women for the first time. By the time Burns and Morse had met in Port Alberni, the RCMP's commanding officers, who were used to regulating the sexuality of single men through the force's marriage rules, were unprepared for the possibility that the lower ranks could marry each other and marry at any time.³⁶ It caused significant upheaval amongst the higher ranks. Burns recalled that, although their peers at the detachment were positive about their engagement, the RCMP's leadership reacted differently:

I recall shock from the senior level and from Victoria [sub-division headquarters]. . . . An officer came up from Victoria and we had to go and meet with the officer. And they didn't know what to do because there was no policy at the time for married members . . . [and] we were saying we want to work and we want to stay on [Vancouver] Island. Well, you can't stay there because at that time the orders were that you had to live within your jurisdiction. The RCMP didn't even have any . . . direction or policy with respect to married members.³⁷

Where Burns and Morse lived and worked after marriage posed an immediate problem for commanding officers who were torn between official policies that stipulated the couple had to live where they policed and a guideline that suggested a married couple could not work together at the same detachment. Eventually, the RCMP moved them to the Vancouver area where they were posted to detachments in different but nearby communities.

Burns and Morse were married in November 1975. Burns wore a white wedding gown. Wearing red serge during the wedding ceremony was not a requirement imposed on Mounties by the RCMP, but rather an informal tradition within RCMP culture that

³⁶ When a member of the RCMP wished to marry a member of the public, the prospective spouse still had to undergo criminal background checks. In the case of RCMP officers marrying each other, however, this was unnecessary.

³⁷ Donna Burns, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

many male Mounties had adopted. For Burns, however, “I always wanted a white [wedding dress]. . . . I still wanted to be feminine. . . . I didn’t want to lose who I was and my gender. And again, that’s kind of a bit of advice: be who you are. I didn’t even think I’d even wear my red serge. I wore a white dress; my husband had [red] serge.”³⁸



Image 7. Ronald Morse and Donna Burns wearing their Review Order dress uniforms in 1975, shortly before their marriage.

Source: Donna Burns Morse

Burns’s desire to wear a white wedding gown was an indication of how girls were socialized to adopt notions of appropriate femininity in Canadian culture. However, by choosing to wear a white gown rather than her red serge, Burns exercised her agency and renegotiated her standing as a female Mountie on her own terms. Burns’s example shows the complex nature of heterosexual marriage in the RCMP in 1975. Female Mounties were still creatures of their times; while some celebrated their difference by

³⁸ Donna Burns, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

meeting conventional gendered expectations, others were interested in challenging gender distinctions by asserting their equality. Indeed, in early 1976, the *RCMP Gazette* featured a photograph of the first two members of the RCMP to marry wearing their red serge uniforms.

Heterosexual Mountie couples soon became common within the RCMP because both spouses understood the nature of police work and the demands of the job.³⁹ Indeed, several of the women interviewed for this research had married fellow RCMP officers. However, problems soon developed over the RCMP's transfer and promotion policies. In 1982, Linden and Minch analyzed the limitations of these policies and their impact on married Mounties from different perspectives, including the possibility of tandem transfers.⁴⁰ It was progressive thinking at the time that posed challenges for an institution that subscribed to the male breadwinner ideology and the use of commanding officers' discretionary power over the lower ranks. Their study was the first to consider the ramifications of transfer policies on the careers of civilian wives, but only insofar as these cases presented the possibility that male Mounties might turn transfers down. They also identified marriage between two Mounties as problematic, citing one study that found that "twelve of fourteen single females were dating members of the Force and five of seven married females had husbands in the Force. This means that the married couples will have to be transferred in pairs and this might create career restrictions as one or both members near promotion."⁴¹ The "problem" of both spouses being Mounties had not existed previously; now that women were being employed by the RCMP as police officers, the problem was being identified in terms of female officers who were marrying.

The marriage of Mounties called into question the viability of the RCMP's traditional transfer policies, which dictated that an officer was transferred every time he was promoted. One researcher commented that this discretionary power "may become removed from management control through the complexity of such arrangements."⁴² It

³⁹ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 128.

⁴⁰ Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 114.

⁴¹ L.P. Laronde, "Policewomen: Female Regular Members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police," cited in Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 114.

⁴² Laronde, cited in Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 114.

was not an assessment the RCMP, a paramilitary organization intent on maintaining control of the rank-and-file, was willing to embrace. By 1987, the RCMP's regulations regarding dual transfers for married police officers were being rigidly applied as the result of a grievance from one Mountie who requested a transfer to be closer to his spouse. Following the ruling, Commr. Robert Simmonds made it clear to one journalist that "there will be no changes in policy to accommodate the careers of a husband and wife who are both members." According to Simmonds, "When a member is accepted in the force, she/he is recruited as an individual and is offered an individual career. This applies whether single or married." For the RCMP, married couples were accommodated only if the "objectives and needs" of the force were being met.⁴³

Questions of posting locations when one partner received a promotion and transfer turned out to be complex. In the case of Pam Osborne, a decision by a Health Services doctor interrupted her personal and professional life significantly. Osborne, who joined the RCMP in 1987, applied for a northern posting but was rejected because she was diagnosed with cold-activated asthma. Shortly afterward, Osborne became engaged to a member of the RCMP. Her fiancé was transferred to the Northwest Territories, but her medical condition required that she receive medical clearance from an RCMP Health Services doctor to have the medical prohibition lifted. Osborne explained to the doctor that she was engaged to a member currently serving in the north and that she wanted to be able to transfer there after they were married. After consulting with an asthma specialist, who reviewed her medical tests, the specialist wrote a letter of support for Osborne's transfer to a northern climate.

Armed with the letter of approval, Osborne returned to the RCMP's Health Services doctor for a follow-up appointment:

He made comments. His first comment to me was he didn't want to stand in the way of cupid's arrow, between me and my fiancé because of this. . . . He said that I'd have to be chasing children around the cold northern arctic and it could put someone's life in danger because there wasn't medical facilities in the north. . . . This man, being in the upper echelon of management too, he controlled my life. He did control my life because Staffing would not go against his decisions. He was very sexist and chauvinistic. He was given ample opportunity by upper management to

⁴³ Kyle, "RCMP Policy Can Separate Family Members at Times."

reverse his position without losing face and refused. . . . It was because of [the Health Services doctor] that I missed twenty-two months of my service. [Initially] my fiancé and I were supposed to go into a community as a couple to work. When the powers-that-be in the Territories found out that I wasn't getting cleared, they called up [my fiancé] and said that "She's not coming, so now where do you want to go? We have this one-man detachment open for you and we'll promote you too." . . . My only option was to take leave without pay [to be with my husband]. It guarantees you your job, just not your spot. I was still with the RCMP, I was just a member without a detachment, and I wasn't on the payroll.⁴⁴

As a result, Osborne moved with her husband to the northern detachment for twenty-two months without pay and without work. Commanding officers in the north placed Osborne's husband in a one-man detachment instead of a posting with a vacancy that Osborne could fill. Further, the RCMP would not recognize Osborne as a spouse until she arrived in the north: "We were married in August but didn't go [north] until October [1993]; but until I was physically there, they would not see us as a couple."⁴⁵ For a time, Osborne existed in a no man's land between being a member of the RCMP without a detachment and being officially recognized as a Mountie wife.

At the time of the medical rejection, Osborne exercised her agency when she lodged a formal grievance over the decision made by the Health Services doctor:

I ultimately won my grievance. . . . The decision found that I had been treated unfairly and the doctor had erred in process. They gave [me] a course of action [to take to reinstate my medical standing]: Run a Cooper's Test and something else, and if I didn't have an asthma attack, clear me for transfer. By the time the decision came in, we were on our house-hunting trip for our transfer to British Columbia, so it was a little too late. I did feel vindicated that they ruled in my favour. . . . The frustrating part was if Health Services had followed policy, I would have been medically cleared long before I was married.⁴⁶

Although Osborne won her grievance, it took twenty-two months to be finalized. By then, Osborne and her husband were in the process of being transferred to British Columbia,

⁴⁴ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006; email communication to author, 30 July 2012.

⁴⁵ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006; email communication to author, 30 July 2012

⁴⁶ Pam Osborne, email communication to author, 30 July 2012.

where she had also received a posting. Osborne was required to buy back her pension contributions when she returned to duty: “There was no choice in the matter. I think now you do have a choice. When it came time for my long service medal, I found out that I was considered to have interrupted service even though the pension had been bought back, so I have lost twenty-two months of service.”⁴⁷ The doctor’s decision has had far-reaching ramifications for Osborne, especially now as she considers retirement and the amount of pension income she will be able to claim.

Osborne’s example illustrates the difficulties that some women officers faced as they prepared to marry male members of the RCMP. More importantly, it demonstrates how interpretations of RCMP policies governing marriage between two Mounties, when they existed, were subject to gendered interpretations that the women were expected to accept. The field was a long way from headquarters in Ottawa, and decisions made by men such as the Health Services doctor illustrate how a complex and centralized bureaucratic system facilitated the systemic harassment of women in the RCMP. Even when presented with an alternative opinion from a medical expert, the RCMP doctor abandoned professionalism by subjecting Osborne to his gendered attitudes that had the power to affect her career negatively. As one policy development officer had already suggested in a 1983 draft study on the reasons for high attrition rates among women in the RCMP, policy reviews regarding marriage between Mounties were necessary to stem the flow of women who were exiting the police force. “I realize that many headaches arise out of this issue,” Cst. Christine Mackie had written, “however it is an inevitable part of women in the RCMP and must be addressed if we do not want to waste the taxpayers’ money by training female members and then not transferring them to be able to live with their husbands.”⁴⁸ Despite the author’s warning, clearly the RCMP still did not have adequate transfer policies in place for female Mounties who were married to male police officers by the time Osborne faced the issue ten years later.

⁴⁷ Pam Osborne, email communication to author, 30 July 2012. Members of the RCMP are awarded a long service medal after twenty years of service.

⁴⁸ Cst. Christine Mackie to Dr. Loo, “Review of Integration of Women Into the RCMP,” 13 December 1983. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

Maternity and the Female Police Body

If marriage between two members of the RCMP created headaches for the police force, they were further complicated when female Mounties became pregnant. The interview material reveals that two key issues emerged over the issue of pregnancy and maternity leave in the RCMP: who had the right to decide when a pregnant woman was removed from operational duties and what type of benefits a woman would receive once she was on maternity leave. Many Canadian employers in the 1950s and 60s maintained it was their legal right to fire married and pregnant women. It was considered socially unacceptable for mothers or married women to work, for male breadwinner ideology was a powerful social construct that prevented many women from re-entering the workforce following marriage or the birth of a baby. Many Canadians viewed women who chose to return to work as unnatural mothers and accused them of selfishly disrupting family roles and values. Further, returning to the workforce following pregnancy was considered a privilege rather than a right by many employers, who were uninterested in maternity leave legislation or in paying maternity benefits.⁴⁹ Joan Sangster argues that when discussions about maternity leave were occurring in the 1960s, the debates were framed in terms of a moral rather than a health issue. Medical experts, when consulted to offer opinions on how long pregnant women could continue to work, admitted that work did not pose a physical threat to the health of pregnant women. But they stipulated that these women should leave work to create a stable home environment and afford consistent care to their children.⁵⁰

Until the 1970s, policewomen and female constables working for municipal departments in Canada who became pregnant were required to resign from their positions. The police department in Toronto maintained that policy until 1972. As late as 1983, the police department in Ottawa required its female officers to take unpaid leave after three months of pregnancy in order to retain their jobs. Other municipal departments placed female police officers on light duties at a reduced rate of pay when they became pregnant. It was not until a landmark ruling by the Ontario Human Rights Commission in 1993 that police forces were required to accommodate pregnant women

⁴⁹ Joan Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs: The Wage-Earning Mother, 1945-70," *A Diversity of Women: Ontario, 1945-1980*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995), 110.

⁵⁰ Sangster, "Doing Two Jobs," 112-13.

by placing them on light duties with full pay. By 1996, many municipal police departments included pregnancy clauses in employee contracts, including full benefits, vacation pay, the maintenance of seniority, and a top-up of wages to 95 percent while receiving seventeen weeks of Unemployment Insurance (UI) benefits from the federal government.⁵¹ But many of these police departments were unionized, unlike the RCMP. Joan Sangster effectively argues that although unions were instrumental in including maternity benefits in collective agreements, the central problem was that management in a variety of industries continued to insist that it was the company's prerogative to "make the rules concerning pregnant women."⁵²

The issue of accommodating pregnant police officers eventually called into question the actions of many police departments that also wanted to make their own rules pertaining to pregnant employees. Many were violating the rights of women who wished to remain working as police officers while pregnant, according to one Ontario Human Rights Commission ruling. In response, the OPP for example, formed an Occupational Health and Safety Committee, which conducted an internal study on the issue. The committee researched occupational issues in a number of industries and consulted with a medical doctor before making recommendations regarding accommodating pregnant police officers – specifically about when pregnant officers were to be removed from active front-line duty and how they would be utilized within the department until they went on maternity leave. The committee found that the question of when to accommodate a female officer was the attending physician's decision, taking the decision about the woman's body away from the woman. The employer's role was to provide meaningful and useful work after a woman was removed from front-line duties. The employee was responsible, in conjunction with her physician, to provide the

⁵¹ Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 37-38. The name of the federal government's unemployment insurance program was changed in 1996 to Employment Insurance. See <http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/employment-insurance-canada-history-structure-and-issues.html> [accessed 6 June 2013].

⁵² Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 191. Also, see Pamela Sugiman, *Labour's Dilemma: The Gender Politics of Auto Workers in Canada, 1937-1979* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1994), 57-58, for a discussion of discriminatory practices against pregnant women in the Canadian auto industry and the response of the Canadian Auto Workers' Union.

employer with information on specific restrictions, if any.⁵³ But the committee's work was concluded in 1996, years away from the development of equitable and fair maternity leave policies in many industries and occupations in Canada, including policing.

In the 1970s, the RCMP lagged behind other police departments when it came to developing firm policies regarding maternity leave. For its part, the RCMP's commanding officers were likely grappling with concerns over liability and safety, for both the women and their fetuses, indicating that the police force was intent on controlling the bodies of its female police officers. As we saw in chapter two, many officers were reluctant to make a final decision over the issue of pregnant officers wearing service revolvers or body armour, and these concerns extended to the issue of the reassignment of duties. Commanding officers were also concerned about the financial commitment required to implement and administer such a policy, and budgetary considerations factored into the delay in establishing a firm policy. From a cultural perspective, many viewed it as unfair to male RCMP officers to pay a police officer's wages to women who were on maternity leave. Operationally, a lengthy maternity leave would create manpower shortages and extra work for rank-and-file members, since fiscal restraints prevented the police force from filling positions left vacant by pregnant women, even temporarily. These factors resulted in the development of guidelines that met minimum government standards: female Mounties were to be reassigned to light duties when pregnant and they were to receive the same amount of maternity leave that all female public servants received, seventeen weeks. They were also eligible to collect UI benefits during that period, but not a percentage of their police officer's wages.

The lack of a maternity leave policy was one way that women in the RCMP were regulated differently than male Mounties. In a hierarchical paramilitary organization in which almost every aspect of the working lives of Mounties was heavily regulated, it was unusual for the RCMP not to develop such an important regulation. It was an omission that suggested that commanding officers viewed women's participation in the occupation as transgressive. The non-regulation of maternity leave also conveyed moralistic ideas concerning motherhood and work. It reminded women that their natural role was

⁵³ Julie Grimaldi, email communication with author, 10 May 2010. Grimaldi is a planning officer in Research and Development in the OPP who was involved in the working group and the final recommendations.

motherhood and that childcare did not require financial remuneration but a family wage earned by a male provider. Sociologist Marilyn Corsianos points out that official policies are “crucial in promoting equality between the sexes and recognizing the differences in women’s lives.”⁵⁴ Gail Walker, in her study of women in policing in Canada concurs. In a survey she had conducted, Walker found that a clearly written maternity leave policy was cited by respondents as a necessary component in retaining and assimilating women in the profession.⁵⁵ The absence of a comprehensive policy subordinated female police officers and contributed to the systemic nature of the discrimination that they faced. Pregnancy was the ultimate symbol of the difference between male and female police bodies, and it was ample evidence, in the eyes of the male-dominated hierarchy, that women were unsuitable as members of the RCMP. It would take almost ten years for the RCMP to develop a comprehensive and equitable maternity leave policy for its female police officers.

Of course, the absence of a maternity leave policy did not deter female Mounties from getting pregnant. They had little choice but to work with the general guidelines that were in place in the RCMP if they wanted to raise a family and remain police officers. Twelve female police officers out of the twenty-two interviewed for this research had children, and seven of those women had multiple pregnancies. In the 1970s and 80s, many chose to hide their pregnancies for as long as possible to remain working on the street, realizing they would be assigned administrative work and receive a reduction in pay once they told their supervisors. A reassignment to work more traditionally associated with femininity during pregnancy was viewed by many of the first female Mounties as a setback to their credibility as police officers. Since office work was often associated with women’s subordination and inferiority within the RCMP, a decision about when to reveal their pregnancy was often a difficult one to make. But a decision about when to disclose a pregnancy was one way female Mounties exercised some control over their own bodies. Ultimately, it was the RCMP’s commanding officers that decided when a pregnant officer stopped work in the field.

⁵⁴ Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 35. The RCMP did not voluntarily agree to embark on an employment equity program until 1995. “Female RCMP Officers Sexually Harassed at Work Six Out of Ten Surveyed Were Affected, Internal Study Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 September 1996.

⁵⁵ Gail S. Walker, *The Status of Women in Canadian Policing: 1993* (Ottawa: Public Security Canada, 1993), xvii.

The experiences of Linda Rutherford and Marianne Robson illustrate how female Mounties struggled with their changing roles and were sometimes torn between their love of working on the street and motherhood. When Rutherford became pregnant in 1980, she worked on patrol for five months until she could no longer get into her trousers. In hindsight, Rutherford remembered that she took too many chances that may have endangered the life of her baby: “I was stupid, quite frankly. . . . There were a number of things I was involved in while I was pregnant that I probably [shouldn’t have done]. Thank God my daughter’s fine. You know, going into a burning house. Just traffic accidents and the smell of everything. I never stopped doing stuff. I wasn’t too smart.”⁵⁶ When Rutherford finally advised her commanding officers she was pregnant, they did not know how to respond since there was no maternity leave policy at the time. She remembered:

They didn’t know what to do with me. So I went [to work] on the front counter [of the detachment office], which was fine with me. I developed a firearm manual there. . . . [And] just being able to work with everybody like the ladies [working] at the detachment and the public coming in. . . . I think I really helped the detachment. Just getting to know the inner workings. And I don’t ever recall anybody being negative to me about being pregnant.⁵⁷

Rutherford eventually had three children while a member of the RCMP. Marianne Robson had two children while working as a Mountie. Robson, who suffered a miscarriage with her first baby, had a second pregnancy in 1981. She remembered:

There was no maternity leave. They had no idea what to do with us. I was working in uniform and I was five months pregnant. . . . I still worked in the streets, still worked the shift work, GD. So there was nothing. There was no benefits. We went on seventeen weeks EI [Employment Insurance] and that was all that there was. . . . My daughter was four months old when I went back to work. Um, and that was it. Right? You had the baby and that was it.⁵⁸

Robson, like Rutherford, waited as long as possible before revealing that she was pregnant to her supervisor. She remembered that “as soon as you announced you were

⁵⁶ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

⁵⁷ Linda Rutherford, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

⁵⁸ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

pregnant, then you went on light duties. So that was a battle I took on.”⁵⁹ Robson decided to agitate for change by advocating for the development of a maternity leave policy that addressed issues such as the length of leave, rate of pay, type of benefits, and seniority retention. Along with another female member, Robson began to meet with the divisional representatives over the issue. They also started a memo-writing campaign to commanding officers to press for the development of a maternity policy. The RCMP, according to Robson, started to develop maternity policies by 1983 or 1984. By the time she gave birth to her second daughter in 1986, Robson recalled she received 93 percent of her police officer’s salary with six months of maternity leave. Exercising her agency as an advocate for maternity benefits was a trailblazing process for Robson and an achievement that she is proud of today. Her experience illustrates the ongoing tension for female officers between exercising agency over their own bodies even as the RCMP sought to control the female police body.

Following the institution of the new regulation in the 1980s, maternity leave created a considerable amount of tension between male and female police officers, as the men struggled to understand the mixed messages they were receiving about women’s biological difference and their equality. Many had difficulty in understanding that it was possible that women could be both equal and different as police officers. As a result, for many men, maternity leave only magnified perceptions that women were receiving preferential treatment since women maintained their seniority while on leave. Male officers also resented the manpower shortages that were created by women on maternity leave, since the RCMP did not back-fill these positions. According to Eva Miller, the RCMP sometimes made maternity leave more difficult than it should have been: “People thought maternity leave was a holiday and female members were getting preferential treatment.”⁶⁰ As a result, the tensions were left to fester amongst the rank-and-file and they divided along gender lines.

Supervisors and commanding officers were also known to pressure female Mounties to return to work before their maternity leave came to an end to counter

⁵⁹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

⁶⁰ Sharon Sisson and Eva Miller quoted in Brenda Zanin, “Police Women in the RCMP: In Touch With the RCMP’s Feminine Side,” *Pony Express* (October 1999), http://www.rcmp.ca/women/women1_e.htm [accessed 15 September 2005].

perceptions of preferential treatment. Jackie Lewis recalled that four months after her second child was born, she began to receive harassing telephone calls from a commanding officer who was anxious for her to return to her position as a singer in the RCMP band. Although Lewis, a special constable, had been replaced by another singer during her maternity leave, the high-ranking officer, who was in charge of public relations for the band, began to threaten that if she did not return to work he would take her job away from her. At the time, Lewis had a prearranged maternity leave agreement with the RCMP of one year without pay. Nevertheless, the commanding officer insisted that she return to work after just four months. According to Lewis,

Then I became very ill with meningitis; I almost died with meningitis. And I remember at that time that I had lost the use of my voice. And I wasn't able to eat. Now [my son] was only a couple of months old. My throat had closed, essentially. I remember he got me on the phone and he said, "When are you coming back to work?" . . . I said, "I can't go back to work." . . . Then he just made life miserable for me [while I was on maternity leave]. Ultimately, I filed a harassment case against him. Six charges of harassment. Three of them were founded and three of them were deemed to be overzealous management. . . . [The harassment] was really hurtful and totally unnecessary.⁶¹

Lewis, who loved her work with the band, eventually returned to her job at the end of one year as originally planned, but not before having to endure persecution by her commanding officer.

Female Mounties like Lewis were cognizant of the resentment that pregnancy generated, and they were wary of NCOs who had the power to change the course of their careers. Almost all of the women interviewed for this study who became pregnant hesitated to tell their supervisors. It became particularly acute for women who had more than one child; multiple pregnancies opened women up to gossip and criticism from male police officers, some of whom accused the women of remaining pregnant so they would not have to work but would still draw a paycheque. When Carol Franklin unexpectedly became pregnant for the third time, she experienced a great deal of stress as she anticipated the reaction of her supervisor and colleagues to the news:

⁶¹ Jackie Lewis, telephone interview with author, 17 May 2010.

I'll tell ya, I was very concerned because there's only two years between [my daughters] and of course, I'm only just back for a year and all of a sudden I'm pregnant again. I was horrified that the members [would be upset] . . . what is the detachment gonna think and everything? I remember going in and the old staff sergeant there. . . . I thought he'd just come unglued. And he looked at me and said, "Don't worry about it. The best thing a woman can do is become a mother."⁶²

Franklin stated that she was uncomfortable about telling the staff sergeant because she was unsure of the amount of support she would receive from both her male and female colleagues. As we have seen, women were not always united by gender, and the fear of group blame was a part of the working lives of female Mounties. Franklin was concerned that some female Mounties may have felt she was letting them down by taking another maternity leave. But the paternalistic approach that Franklin's staff sergeant took in articulating the importance of being a mother over a police officer, while it eased Franklin's angst, revealed how female Mounties remained subject to assumptions about a woman's proper role in society. Moralistic discourses about sexuality, pregnancy, and working women governed the thinking of many of the RCMP's supervisors who informally regulated the female police body by contributing to their anxiety and fear, and by expressing their anger for having to fulfill operational commitments with fewer staff.

Female Mounties also experienced backlash over maternity leave from an unexpected source. In the 1980s, the federal government's Treasury Board was in charge of negotiating pay increases and benefits packages for all federal employees, including the RCMP. When an official maternity leave benefits package for female RCMP officers was approved by the Treasury Board, with input from the divisional representatives, members of the RCMP received an annual raise that was half a percent lower than anticipated. According to Jane Hall, "A widespread rumour erroneously blamed the maternity benefit for a half-percent lower annual raise that year. There were only about 550 female members coast to coast by the mid-1980s, most of whom were unmarried, which could hardly have any effect on a wage settlement for over sixteen thousand members."⁶³ Nevertheless, the women of the RCMP were accused of costing male police officers a better wage increase. Consequently, female Mounties who

⁶² Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

⁶³ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 230.

transgressed conventional notions of motherhood became a target for critics who blamed them for a number of problems related to benefits and pay. It was an ironic situation: female Mounties were considered unsuitable as mothers for transgressing the norms of motherhood, but they were also criticised when they sought benefits based on motherhood.

Male police officers occasionally used the issue of maternity and motherhood to resist the integration of women into specialized sections of the police force. When Lauren Fleming expressed an interest to her trainer in applying for the dog section in eastern Canada, he tried to dissuade her by using the argument that she was going to have children one day. She remembered him saying, "By the time you get in [to the dog section], you're going to have kids. . . . What are you going to do? Get up at 3:00 in the morning [and] go into the bush with your kids home sleeping? Are you going to put yourself in that position?"⁶⁴ His comments revealed that some of the men in the RCMP struggled with the concept of a mother doing what was still considered to be masculine work. It was an argument about motherhood steeped in the conventional idea that women belonged at home with their children, not performing shift work or patrolling city streets at night. His comments had the desired effect, albeit temporarily, as Fleming delayed applying to the section for one year. Eventually, though, she decided that working and training as a dog handler was something she really wanted to do and that she would deal with balancing a family and career when the time came.

The perception that women were to adopt the role as the primary caregivers of children was widespread in Canadian society at the time, and it was a social construction that both men and women in the RCMP accepted. Researcher Gail Walker found that the majority of Canadian female police officers who responded to her survey questions experienced "tremendous pressure in attempting to manage both a family and a career."⁶⁵ Several of the women interviewed for this study struggled with balancing the well-being of their children with the demands placed on them by their policing careers, something male Mounties who were fathers did not have to contend with. For example, Lorraine Gibson commented, "You had to do things a lot different than a single guy or a guy that had kids. It didn't affect my career path, but it was a lot more challenging to fit it

⁶⁴ Lauren Fleming, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

⁶⁵ Walker, *The Status of Women in Canadian Policing*, xviii.

all in.”⁶⁶ Gibson, a single mother, was sent on a five-month training course in another province on one occasion. Her daughters were under the age of five at the time, so she took them with her. Fortunately, her parents lived nearby. Gibson recalled,

I actually moved my kids with me. I took them to my parents’ house . . . trained all week and then on weekends I’d go see my kids. . . . You know, and it’s funny because you see these guys going through training and, “Oh, it’s so hard being away.” And they have no concept, you know, if they were the main caregiver for their kids how hard it was to be away from them and do all this [work-related] stuff. . . . My parents are amazing. I wouldn’t have been able to do it if they wouldn’t have done that. So my kids basically lived with them for five months.⁶⁷

Without the help of family members or adequate childcare, it was almost impossible for female Mounties to balance family demands and their careers.

Shift work created a number of problems for the women, too. Marianne Robson, a single mother with two daughters, found it difficult to find childcare because she never knew what time she would be home:

I think back on that now and think, “How the hell did I do it?” I was working drug section, I had a baby, a four-month-old baby and a four-year old, and I was on my own. . . . I didn’t have a nanny, but I had a babysitter come in because I never knew when I was getting home. It was probably a nineteen- or twenty-year-old girl. So that wasn’t always easy either, you know. And of course not coming to work because your babysitter didn’t show up [or] because your kids were sick, I mean that didn’t do it. That didn’t do it. So um, yeah, the force had no lenience at all [when it came to asking for time off for family reasons]. Absolutely none.⁶⁸

Apart from shift work, the potential for job-related injury or death also concerned some of the narrators. Lorraine Gibson, who hired a nanny to live with her following her divorce, illustrated how the threat of danger made a difference in how she viewed being a mother and a police officer:

I think it was especially noticeable once I got divorced. I really started to think about what if I don’t come home? . . . One night I came home from a

⁶⁶ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

⁶⁷ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

⁶⁸ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July, 2008.

call and it must have been five in the morning or something. As I walk in the door, my oldest came running down the stairs and she's wet the bed. And she's crying, "I was looking for you and you weren't here." It just ripped my heart out. So, [I realized] I need a day job. I started looking outside [the section I was working in for a position with regular working hours]. . . . My priority was my kids and doing what was best for them. . . . And the thought of something happening. I never felt that danger thing when I was married. I think all of a sudden, thinking of my girls without a mom. It was not okay when I was married, but when I was not married anymore, then it was really, you know, harder.⁶⁹

Gibson's story shows how some women struggled with their role as a police officer and a mother. She eventually obtained a non-shift work position within the RCMP that accommodated her desire for regular hours and work away from the dangers of the street. In Gibson's case, the potential for death was enough to warrant a shift in career focus, something many single parents in the RCMP, both male and female, struggled to come to terms with.

Women in the RCMP were regulated both officially and informally and often struggled to balance their personal lives with the professional demands that working in a male-dominated occupation presented. Despite their struggles and challenges, the women who were hired by the RCMP in the 1970s and 80s made significant gains and exercised considerable agency in advocating for changes that benefitted the women who followed in their footsteps. Some things stayed the same, however, and RCMP culture remained steadfastly committed to the idea of compulsory heterosexuality for its police officers.

The Lesbian Mountie

Heterosexuality, as we have seen, was foundational to the image of the RCMP and the sexual behaviour of all Mounties was regulated with an eye to maintaining positive public opinion about the morality of the police force. Compulsory heterosexuality reinforced the image of the Mountie hero as incorruptible, an image that was used to justify their investigation of Canadians for deviant behaviour. This moral regulation of Canadians was particularly evident during the Cold War years, when the RCMP was actively engaged in investigating civil servants from a number of federal agencies who

⁶⁹ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

were deemed to be national security risks because of their sexual orientation. Homosexuals were considered security risks because they presumably feared the public exposure of their sexual orientation, making them susceptible to blackmail by foreign spies interested in obtaining government secrets. Between 1961 and 1962, the RCMP identified 850 civil servants as suspected or confirmed homosexuals.⁷⁰ Expanding their mandate beyond the federal civil service, by 1967, the force had assembled an index that contained over eight thousand names of Canadians suspected of being homosexual.⁷¹

The project of regulating the sexuality of federal civil servants was massive in scope, and the RCMP's Security Service sought quicker and more economically viable ways of identifying homosexuals than developing informants or conducting field investigations. A scientific means of detecting homosexuality through a machine or psychological testing was sought, since homosexuals did not necessarily exhibit characteristics that distinguished them from heterosexuals.⁷² Psychological research being conducted by a Carleton University professor, Frank Wake, captured the RCMP's interest. Wake was developing a detecting device, dubbed the "fruit machine" by the RCMP, whereby suspected homosexuals were shown a series of hetero- and homoerotic pictures. Their eye movements in response to the pictures were recorded to detect signs of sexual deviancy and determine their sexual orientation.⁷³ Between thirty and thirty-five people were actually tested on the fruit machine by Wake, but with mixed findings. As a result, it was never used in an official capacity.⁷⁴ In the end, the RCMP's aggressive pursuit of homosexuals resulted in hundreds of people being fired from their civil service jobs and their rights violated. According to Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, "The era of the fruit machine in the late 1950s and early 1960s can now be recognized as a dark age, both for the RCMP and for a society that the RCMP faithfully, if over-

⁷⁰ Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 4.

⁷¹ Less than 3,000 of the people on that list were actually working as civil servants. Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 191. Also in Daniel J. Robinson and David Kimmel, "The Queer Career of Homosexual Security Vetting in Cold War Canada," *Canadian Historical Review* 75:3 (1994): 320-21.

⁷² Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 167-69.

⁷³ Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 180-81.

⁷⁴ Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 188.

zealously, reflected.”⁷⁵ But the ethos that informed this over-zealous pursuit remained embedded in the culture of the RCMP, where homosexuality continued to be associated with character weakness and deviancy.

The RCMP continued to regulate homosexuality within the civil service throughout the following decades with the support of the federal government.⁷⁶ According to Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, in a statement made in the House of Commons in 1973, homosexuals remained a security risk and would continue to be denied security clearances as federal employees.⁷⁷ Clearly, the police force had an interest in promoting and enforcing heterosexuality as normative. Marianne Robson confirmed that, throughout the 1970s and 80s, heterosexual men in the RCMP resisted the presence of homosexual police officers. She observed that male Mounties felt that gay men were not only a challenge to masculinity in general, but a challenge to the profession of policing.⁷⁸ As one researcher noted, “If gay men (who were stereotyped as effeminate) and women (who are seen as weaker and more passive than men) can perform effectively as police officers, then there is nothing that makes policing distinctly masculine.”⁷⁹ It is thus not surprising that homosexuals working as Mounties during this period concealed their sexual orientation from their colleagues. Researchers have found that gay men in particular tended to “exaggerate normative verbal and physical heterosexual performances in order to be seen as ‘team players’ and foster relations with male officers.”⁸⁰ As a result, gay and lesbian police officers experienced the added pressure of having to appear heterosexual, engaging in a performance for the purposes of survival in a culture hostile to alternative sexualities.

The dominance of heteronormativity in police culture prompted male Mounties to monitor their female counterparts for signs of appropriately heterosexual, feminine behaviour. During the 1970s, as the author of one contemporary study of women police

⁷⁵ Whitaker, Kealey, and Parnaby, *Secret Service*, 192.

⁷⁶ Gary Kinsman, “Constructing Gay Men and Lesbians as National Security Risks, 1950-70,” *Whose National Security?: Canadian State Surveillance and the Creation of Enemies*, eds. Gary Kinsman, Dieter K. Buse, and Mercedes Steedman (Toronto: Between the Lines, 2000): 143-44.

⁷⁷ Kinsman and Gentile, *The Canadian War on Queers*, 222.

⁷⁸ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

⁷⁹ Bernstein and Kostelac, “Lavender and Blue,” 307.

⁸⁰ Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 105.

officers and the sexual politics of the workplace observed, policemen frequently categorized female police officers into several gendered roles, including seductress, lady, girl, nurturing mother, lesbian, or bitch. According to Susan Martin, female police officers were expected to choose from one of these roles. The seductress, mother, girl, and lady were considered conventional norms that women were encouraged to fulfill in order to reinforce the men's sense of masculinity; yet, they were roles that left the women open for criticism for not pulling their weight.⁸¹ Martin does not specifically address lesbianism in her article, apart from observing that labels of lesbian or bitch were frequently applied to women who failed to flirt, rejected male sexual advances, or failed to acknowledge male superiority. But the idea that women chose to be lesbians because they were bitter toward men was a common assumption during the 1970s in wider Canadian society. Indeed, researchers from the period assumed that all women were "innately sexually oriented" toward men, and those that chose otherwise were deviant.⁸²

Rumours and gossip about female police officers fuelled speculation about the women's sexual orientation, especially those who resisted the sexual advances being made by a male police officer. Gossip about sexual orientation was a powerful strategy in the maintenance of "virtuous heterosexuality" of the women.⁸³ Male police officers often assumed that there were just two reasons why women wanted to be police officers: they were either lesbians or they were looking for a Mountie husband. If a female police officer rebuffed the sexual advances of a male colleague, she was immediately labeled a lesbian, especially if she was unmarried. According to Shelly Evans, "[A]s long as you were doing what they wanted, everything was fine. But as soon as you had to be authoritative, they associated authority with being gay. I'm a guy, I'm flirting with you, you're not giving me what I want, you must be gay."⁸⁴ Women were expected to walk a fine line between being authoritative and conforming to notions of appropriate femininity. Too much of the former and not enough of the latter signaled a disruption to the idea of a

⁸¹ Susan E. Martin, "Sexual Politics in the Workplace: The Interactional World of Policewomen," *Symbolic Interaction* 1:2 (Spring 1978): 56.

⁸² Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5:4 (Summer 1980): 632.

⁸³ Jackson, *Women Police*, 38-39.

⁸⁴ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

compulsory heterosexuality that was embedded in RCMP culture. According to the narrators, it was a tension that all female Mounties were required to negotiate: embrace the masculine ethos of the culture and risk being labeled a lesbian, or retain a strong feminine identity and risk unwanted sexual attention.⁸⁵

Other male police officers became suspicious of a woman's sexual orientation if she developed a close friendship with a woman. Trish O'Brien, who is heterosexual, discovered this firsthand after rumours began to circulate about her relationship with a female friend who also worked at the detachment:

She was a public servant. We ended up being close friends. I mean we went everywhere together. . . . Rumour got out that we were gay. I didn't have a boyfriend and she was, I think she might have been separated from her husband. . . . Anyway, at first we sort of laughed it off. But then it really started to get annoying. Jeez, if you can't have a friend, what business is it of theirs anyway? And I'm going back to the 70s now, the whole outlook on that was different than it is today. Then it was like, oh my god, people are gonna say that? Back then . . . it was even used as blackmail at one time. I remember them [the RCMP] saying if you were involved in anything like that you were subject to blackmail. . . . We went into our boss and said, "Listen, there's rumours going around and we're getting really sick of it. And there's comments being made openly in front of us that we're gay." And anyway, he didn't know how to handle this. He was an old fart anyway. He held this detachment meeting one day [to discuss] regular issues, and at the end of the meeting he brings that up, right in front of us and them. "Oh, and by the way, before we leave, someone's spreading the rumour that Trish and Shirley are lesbians." . . . The place, you could hear a pin drop. We were devastated. . . . [Being gay in the RCMP] was a big thing back then.⁸⁶

O'Brien's experience illustrates how women were publicly shamed for participating in what appeared to be a non-heterosexual relationship. Shaming, according to Digby Tantam, is a powerful mechanism of social control that bolsters the power of individuals or groups. Lingering shame alters a person's belief about themselves and, in extreme cases, alters their capacity for emotional response to others.⁸⁷ Rather than confronting the offenders, the NCO chose to exert his power and control over the women by

⁸⁵ Herbert, "Hard Charger or Station Queen?," 62.

⁸⁶ Trish O'Brien, interview with author, 13 November 2008.

⁸⁷ Digby Tantam, "The Emotional Disorders of Shame," *Shame: Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture*, eds. Paul Gilbert and Bernice Andrews (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 172.

shaming them in front of their accusers. It remained a profound experience for O'Brien even years later as she recalled the event during the research interview.

It is little wonder that those who were lesbian in the RCMP in the 1970s and 80s hid their sexual orientation. Margaret Watson commented that although there were three lesbians in her troop at Depot in 1977, it was not something she discovered until years later.⁸⁸ Marianne Robson did not remember there being any lesbians in Troop 17 in 1974. But Robson was also aware that it was not something that was discussed in the 1970s: "You didn't talk about that back then. Back in the 70s. I mean gays in the mounted police? . . . [The leadership did not] want to talk about that, although there's lots and lots of lesbians in the mounted police. I saw lots and lots in training [years later] when I was an instructor at Depot."⁸⁹ Living with thirty-one women in close quarters in dormitories for six months during training sometimes made it difficult to conceal sexual orientation. Occasionally, it caused problems within a troop, suggesting that male RCMP officers were not the only group interested in reinforcing heterosexual behaviour as normative. Leslie Clark, who was in an all-female troop at Depot in 1987, remembered that one woman was suspected of being a lesbian: "[I]t did cause a little turmoil at one point. More because 'Was she or wasn't she? What does this mean?' I think most of us didn't care and a few just wanted to know where they stood or whatever." The fact that the woman's sexual orientation was unclear was an issue for some of her troop mates since the woman's pit partner was heterosexual.⁹⁰ "But it was more like some people had this conspiracy theory that she was trying to convert [her pit partner] or something." Although the gay member was not out at the time, speculation amongst the women about her orientation continued. "Somebody made a remark in the dorm one day and said, 'Well, maybe she should say whether she is or isn't.' I just regret not saying something [to these women]. Because I was gonna say something about 'Well, who the hell cares?' And I didn't."⁹¹ The response of some of Clark's troop mates demonstrates that while these women were struggling against gender discrimination, they were

⁸⁸ Margaret Watson, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

⁸⁹ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

⁹⁰ Some of the dormitories at Depot at the time were large rooms that housed an entire troop of thirty-two recruits. The space was divided up into groupings of two. Two recruits shared a clothes cupboard and desk area that was situated between their beds. This space was colloquially referred to as "the pit."

⁹¹ Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

anxious because they had adopted notions of “normal” sexuality. Women, like their male colleagues, were not above employing gossip to perpetuate discriminatory attitudes toward those who did not fit dominant notions of sexuality.

In some contexts, however, lesbians were more readily accepted as police officers than heterosexual women. Lesbian police officers were sometimes assumed to be more masculine and therefore more competent. Further, researchers found that lesbians were more likely than heterosexual female police officers to adopt masculine traits in order to gain respect from their male colleagues.⁹² It was a development occurring in police departments across North America. In Seattle, for example, lesbians were viewed by male police officers as physically tougher than heterosexual female police officers. Male officers also discovered that lesbian officers were not seen as a sexual threat by their wives. The “guys got to the point where they really wanted to work with gay females” according to one officer.⁹³ Their nominal acceptance in some police departments, however, should not be misconstrued as a general acceptance. In the RCMP, gay women were “tremendously threatening” to some male police officers, according to Bill Jones. Remembering one lesbian officer under his command who had donned her red serge Review Order uniform and marched in a gay pride parade with her Mountie partner, he observed, “Things like that really did challenge the poor right-wing, stuck-in-the-mud members to look at how they accepted their co-workers.” Jones recalled that this woman was confident enough to handle any backlash she may have received. But for most lesbian Mounties, according to Jones, “it was tough enough to be accepted as a female member, let alone a gay female member” in the RCMP.⁹⁴

Lesbians, like heterosexual women and gay men, were constructed as others because they challenged the image of the police as heterosexual and highly masculine. Kate Morton, who joined in 1977, was gay but was not out when she went through training in Depot. According to her, there were at least three women in her troop who were gay: “In our troop it wasn’t something anybody talked about. So I had no idea if anybody else in the troop knew. . . . Maybe some people did, but it wasn’t anything that anyone discussed. It didn’t seem to bother anybody. It wasn’t like anybody was out.

⁹² Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 105.

⁹³ Eisenberg, *A Different Shade of Blue*, 154.

⁹⁴ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

None of us were out.”⁹⁵ After Morton was posted to a rural detachment in eastern Canada in 1984, she began to experience harassment in the form of multiple transfers around the area. At the time, Morton was openly living with a woman and rumours and gossip about their relationship were having an impact on her career. Morton suspected that the transfers had a lot to do with her sexual orientation:

I think that [being gay] was probably one of the reasons . . . because it was after I decided that I was leaving, one of my buddies came and he said, “I’ll be honest. There’s this rumour going around, you know, we’re here to support you, so you don’t have to leave.” I said, “No, I’ve already made up my mind. I’m going. I’ve had enough.” . . . But they weren’t going to obviously force the issue because at least to that extent, you know, there’s going to be a human rights issue here so we’re not going to frig around with her. But, um, there was no exit interview. There was nothing like that.⁹⁶

The fact that Morton was denied an exit interview following her resignation was not unusual in the RCMP at the time. It was a practice that was not enforced across the country and was only occasionally offered to departing employees at the discretion of supervisors. But Morton’s failure to embrace heterosexual norms clearly singled her out for harassment. Although her male friend did not want her to leave the RCMP, he did not have the power to alter her situation. That power rested with the commanding officers who refused to discuss openly her sexual orientation with her and worked instead to pressure her informally to resign. Her example is important because it describes how the RCMP’s commanding officers not only monitored the personal lives of the rank-and-file, but how they handled junior police officers who subverted the heterosexual standards the police force embraced. As guardians of the image and reputation of the RCMP in the Canadian communities they policed, these officers regulated the sexuality of the female officers under their command in an attempt to reinforce the heteronormative masculine character of the RCMP and to relieve wider social anxieties about lesbians working as police officers. Morton, who was relieved to leave the RCMP, did not pursue litigation against the police force.

⁹⁵ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

⁹⁶ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008.

Sexual Harassment and the Female Police Body

In 1973, Mary Anderson, a sergeant in charge of the Youth Division with the Portland police department in Portland, Oregon, developed a brochure for women considering a career in policing. In *Women in Law Enforcement: A Primer for Policewomen*, Anderson wrote that the goal of women in policing was to “complement the fine work being done by our brother officers.”⁹⁷ She offered a highly gendered discourse that illustrated the degree to which some policewomen had absorbed masculinity as a natural component of police work. For example, she explained that the thought of women carrying a gun was frightening to “the ordinary citizen or the bravest superman” because it was “generally accepted that she might miss her target and hit some innocent bystander.”⁹⁸ Allowing that it was human nature to “feel more secure with male leadership,” Anderson explained that women needed to adopt the following four leadership traits: fairness to all, fearlessness in meeting problems, fundamentals of the work, and femininity. Femininity was important because “a male leader is expected to be very masculine, and in my book, it then follows that a female leader must be ‘a lady’ to gain the respect of her subordinates.”⁹⁹ Anderson’s primer is noteworthy for its description of the ways women that were expected to accommodate masculine police culture and conform to conventional notions of masculinity and femininity while on the job. Although Anderson was addressing policewomen rather than female police constables, her primer is important because it illustrates the nature of the work environment that female police officers entered once they began to be hired as constables in the 1970s.

Perhaps Anderson’s most disturbing piece of advice to women concerned the attention paid to the female police body by male police officers:

Within the bureau, you will often find yourself one woman in a group of men, some married and some single. It is the nature of men, as noted in all writings of fiction and history, to enjoy looking at pretty girls. Some just like to look at ANY girls, and may go so far as to pitch, pat and play with the ones they meet . . . but that’s the nature of the beast, gals. . . . Try not

⁹⁷ Mary A. Anderson, *Women in Law Enforcement: A Primer for Policewomen* (Portland, Ore.: Metropolitan Press, 1973), 14.

⁹⁸ Anderson, *Women in Law Enforcement*, 24.

⁹⁹ Anderson, *Women in Law Enforcement*, 25.

to take yourself too seriously, and learn that men and women can be friends when not on a dating basis.¹⁰⁰

Anderson's acceptance of being patted or played with while on the job as a natural outcome of working with men placed the onus for "inciting" sexual overtures by male police officers squarely on their female colleagues. Under the heading of "Ethics," Anderson described how male police officers were not only trying to impress a policewoman but were "vying with each other like any other healthy male animal" for her attention.¹⁰¹ It is interesting to note that Anderson did not question the ethics of sexually aggressive male police officers. Instead, she maintained that managing male sexual behaviour in the workplace was the responsibility of women. The fact that Anderson urged policewomen not to take themselves too seriously while men made sexual overtures was a reflection of the extent to which sexist behaviours toward women in the workplace were commonly accepted at the time.

These behaviours and attitudes in the workplace increased with the arrival of female police officers. Sexual harassment as a structure of dominance within police culture was commonplace in most western police forces as more women entered the profession in the 1970s. Indeed, it was commonplace in many male-dominated industries and occupations at the time.¹⁰² In the United States, for example, women working in the construction industry launched two lawsuits that resulted in federal legislation against sexual harassment. Several women testified that male construction workers verbally abused them, issued threats, and resorted to physical violence and sexual assault in an effort to force them out of the occupation.¹⁰³ In Canada, Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen, in their 1978 path-breaking study *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment and Working Women*, wrote that sexual harassment was not an expression of sexual desire but an assertion of power "expressed in a physical

¹⁰⁰ Anderson, *Women in Law Enforcement*, 30.

¹⁰¹ Anderson, *Women in Law Enforcement*, 30.

¹⁰² See Kanter, *Men and Women of the Corporation*, 233-37. Also Marsh and Haarr, "Gender, Workplace Problems, and Stress in Policing," 132.

¹⁰³ Carrie N. Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s," *Feminist Studies* 30:1 (Spring 2004): 16.

manner.”¹⁰⁴ Using a number of case studies to describe the range of behaviour that constituted sexual harassment in the workplace, Backhouse and Cohen adopted the definition used by Working Women United Institute (WWUI), a non-profit American organization established to fight sexual harassment, as “any repeated and unwanted sexual comments, looks, suggestions or physical contact that you find objectionable or offensive and causes you discomfort on the job.”¹⁰⁵ Backhouse and Cohen described the behaviour as including verbal innuendo, inappropriate affectionate gestures, attempted rape, rape, pinching, grabbing, hugging, patting, leering, touching, and subtle hints, or overt requests for dates and sexual favours. They noted that since men held most of the positions of power and influence in a hierarchical work structure, it was inevitable that sexual harassment became a common feature of many workplaces.¹⁰⁶

It was not long before sexual harassment as a discriminatory act in the workplace, and as a violation of human rights, began to be recognized by provincial and federal human rights tribunals in Canada. The first significant case in the development of sexual harassment case law took place in 1980 in Ontario and was adjudicated by a Board of Inquiry charged with enforcing the *Ontario Human Rights Code*. In *Bell v. The Flaming Steer Steakhouse*, Bell, one of two complainants in the case, alleged that the respondent had “subjected her to gender-based insults and taunting and propositioned her.” Bell alleged that she had been fired for her failure to comply. However, the board of inquiry could not find proof that Bell had been discharged because she refused the sexual advances of her employer, and dismissed the case.¹⁰⁷ Although Bell lost her case, the board’s adjudicator did find that sexual harassment by an employer could amount to sex discrimination when it was found to be a condition of employment, opening the door for the development of case law on the issue.

¹⁰⁴ Constance Backhouse and Leah Cohen, *The Secret Oppression: Sexual Harassment of Working Women* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1978), 42.

¹⁰⁵ Backhouse and Cohen, *The Secret Oppression*, 38.

¹⁰⁶ Backhouse and Cohen, *The Secret Oppression*, 39.

¹⁰⁷ Deborah Ann Campbell, *The Evolution of Sexual Harassment Case Law in Canada* (Kingston: Industrial Relations Centre, Queen’s University, 1992), 10.

In July 1983, the *Canadian Human Rights Act* was amended to include sexual harassment as “discrimination on the ground of sex.”¹⁰⁸ The Canadian Human Rights Commission described sexual harassment as including:

. . . verbal abuse or threats; unwelcome remarks, jokes, innuendos, or taunting; displaying of pornographic or other offensive or derogatory pictures; practical jokes which cause awkwardness or embarrassment; unwelcome invitations or requests, whether indirect or explicit or intimidation; leering or other gestures; unnecessary physical contact such as touching, patting, pinching, punching; or physical assault.¹⁰⁹

The Commission also provided guidelines to aid provincial human rights boards and the legal profession in determining what type of conduct constituted sexual harassment:

. . . unwanted sexual attention of a persistent or abusive nature, made by a person who knows or ought reasonably to know that such attention is unwanted; implied or expressed threat or reprisal, in the form either of actual reprisal or the denial of opportunity, for refusal to comply with a sexually oriented request; sexually oriented remarks and behaviour which may reasonably be perceived to create a negative psychological and emotional environment for work.¹¹⁰

Sexual harassment was ruled as discriminatory because it detrimentally affected the work environment and constituted a barrier to the employment of women.¹¹¹

Since the *Canadian Human Rights Act* was not changed to include sexual harassment until 1983, female Mounties were working for the RCMP for nine years before they gained the legal right to contest sexual harassment through formal external avenues. In the 1970s and 80s, the human rights of both male and female police officers were not generally regarded as a legitimate concern for commanding officers. When

¹⁰⁸ Canadian Human Rights Commission, *Sexual Harassment Casebook, 1978-1984* (Ottawa, ON: Canadian Human Rights Commission, 1984), overleaf. Ten grounds of discrimination were prohibited by law under the *Canadian Human Rights Act* at the time: “sex, age, race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, marital status, family status, convictions for which a pardon was granted, or disability.” *Ibid*, unnumbered.

¹⁰⁹ Campbell, *The Evolution of Sexual Harassment Case Law*, 10.

¹¹⁰ Campbell, *The Evolution of Sexual Harassment Case Law*, 10-11.

¹¹¹ Chabursky, “The Employment Equity Act,” 353. At the time, sexual harassment of men in the workplace was not a consideration and case law applied only to complaints by women.

asked about the receptiveness of the RCMP to concepts of individual rights in the workplace, Marianne Robson, a member of the first troop, laughed at the suggestion:

Nil! Nil! I mean, that was just something that wasn't [discussed]. I mean, you had no rights! You were property of the Mounted Police almost. That [was the] perspective. . . . Even to this day, it's still, "Do your job and keep your mouth shut. Do what you're told and don't ask questions." . . . Of course policing is very closed; closed walls, a closed community. Protect each other, take care of each other, um, don't create waves, do as you're told. It all comes from that paramilitary background.¹¹²

In the absence of legal definitions of sexual harassment in the 1970s, it quickly became a systemic problem in the RCMP. All of the female RCMP officers interviewed for this research were subjected to some form of sexual harassment at some point in their careers, although one was reluctant to characterize it as such.¹¹³ It was a finding consistent with research from the period about women who were working as police officers in general.¹¹⁴ More recent studies have shown that while 50 to 58 percent of women in the broader workforce experienced some form of sexual harassment, the rate for women working in non-traditional occupations such as policing and firefighting was higher, at 69 to 77 percent. Further, women working in policing were less likely to identify harassing behaviours as such, even though they were more likely to be sexually harassed than women working in other occupations.¹¹⁵

Lindsay Galloway's experience serves as an early example of how sexual harassment could adversely affect a woman's career as a police officer. Galloway was twenty-three years old when she graduated from Depot in 1977. Her first posting was to a small city detachment in western Canada. There were other female RCMP officers working at the detachment at the time, and she recalled that members of the community, as well as her peers, respected her and were supportive of women in the RCMP. Galloway noticed, however, that higher-ranking older male officers working at the detachment thought that women did not belong in the RCMP. According to Galloway,

¹¹² Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹¹³ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

¹¹⁴ See Ott, "Effects of the Male-Female Ratio at Work," 50; Kurtz, "Controlled Burn," 233-34.

¹¹⁵ Penny E. Harrington and Kimberly A. Lonsway, *Investigating Sexual Harassment in Law Enforcement and Nontraditional Fields for Women* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 11.

“They were old-school and they didn’t think that women were strong enough or big enough; they couldn’t handle themselves in a bar fight, they would be afraid, the usual clichés about women not being tough enough.”¹¹⁶ Despite this opposition to women’s employment as Mounties, Galloway did well on her watch, enjoyed the work, and was proud of her service as a Mountie.

That changed dramatically with the arrival of a new NCO, who was placed in charge of her watch. Galloway recalled that when she first met him at the detachment, “[H]e took one look at me and I knew that I was going to have a problem. I knew it.”¹¹⁷ It was not long before the NCO, who was living with another woman at the time, began to sexually harass her. Within half an hour of the start of every graveyard shift (midnight to 8:00 am), the NCO called Galloway back to the detachment. He would get in the police cruiser and stay with her for the duration of the shift. Galloway described being in the police cruiser with the NCO in this way:

I would be driving. Now he would do this every night. Every graveyard shift, he would do this. And he would say, “You know, if you’re friendly, if you’re good to me, I can help your career.” And he would say, “Let’s drive out to my place for coffee.” . . . He would actually say, “Don’t answer any calls [on the police radio]. Don’t take calls.” It was awful. We went to his home, and I was literally, I was so repulsed by this man, I would stand by the door. I didn’t have coffee. And I thought, if you even touch me, I swear I’m gonna kill you. And he didn’t touch me. He knew I was revolted by him. And I was dating [another RCMP member] at that time. . . . And he was living with someone. He was living with another female member. . . . Virtually every night . . . he would sit there and just peer at me. Can you imagine? And tell me not to take calls?¹¹⁸

Galloway reported the harassment to the OIC of the detachment, describing the unwanted advances being made by the NCO and the fact that she no longer wanted to work with him. The OIC thought that the NCO was “just being friendly” and suggested that she was overreacting. Since she liked her OIC and respected his opinions, she decided that if she went outside of the detachment with her complaints, she would not be believed, or worse, she would be fired. Galloway approached other members of her

¹¹⁶ Lindsay Galloway, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹¹⁷ Lindsay Galloway, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹¹⁸ Lindsay Galloway, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

watch, complaining about the NCO's advances: "I could see they were afraid because he was their supervisor too, and they were afraid that they would get a bad, if they intervened or went to him, that he would give them a bad [annual performance] assessment. So that's what they were afraid of. I know. I know that's what they were afraid of."¹¹⁹ As the preceding chapter described, junior male officers were also subject to the power and control of NCOs. They, too, feared some form of retaliation if they came to the aid of a female member who was being harassed. It was a valid fear, according to researchers on sexual harassment, who noted that retaliation often took tangible forms such as job-related actions, but as was Galloway's experience, they also took intangible forms such as the spread of rumours, shunning, or ostracization.¹²⁰

Galloway, who says she became more and more depressed, continued to refuse the NCO's advances. Her worst fears materialized on the day that she received her annual performance rating:

Of course I got a bad assessment. And I quit, on the spot, that day. That would have been '79. I quit. I had been in two years. But that was my reason for quitting. . . . I thought I'm never, I'm stuck with him, no one's gonna help me, and I was profoundly depressed at the time. . . . I think they all thought that because he didn't touch me, I was overreacting. But it was really insidious. . . . It was just outrageous sexual harassment. . . . Knowing what I know today, I would never allow it to go on. Ever. But I didn't have the information, I didn't have the tools. I thought I did all the right things by complaining.¹²¹

The NCO's attempts to assert his control and dominance over her through sexual harassment created a hostile work environment for Galloway, who later lodged an official complaint against the NCO at RCMP headquarters in Ottawa. She felt that her complaint did have an impact on the NCO's career, since he was later transferred to a small town and denied a promotion. But this punishment was inconsequential compared to the price Galloway paid for the harassment. Not only did she lose her job, but her futile attempts

¹¹⁹ Lindsay Galloway, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

¹²⁰ Penny E. Harrington and Kimberly A. Lonsway, *Investigating Sexual Harassment in Law Enforcement and Nontraditional Fields for Women*, (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 53-54.

¹²¹ Lindsay Galloway, interview with author, 25 February 2008.

to get senior officers to believe or act on her claims seriously compromised her mental health at the time.

Galloway's willingness to report the harassment was unusual. Most of the sexual harassment in the RCMP in the 1970s and 80s went unreported. "You didn't go and report [human rights violations] in 1975," explained Carolyn Harper. "Number one, you're battling a whole pile of things, including the fact that you're a woman in the force. You're trying to gain respect. The last thing you wanted to do was walk into a supervisor's door and start crying on his shoulder" and risk being labeled a complainer or whiner.¹²² Because women were trying to negotiate their positions in a male-dominated institution, they hesitated to report incidents of sexual harassment and attempted to cope with the issue on their own.

Sexual harassment is considered a form of organizational behaviour in that "the harasser uses his position within the organization and sometimes the organization's resources to further his sexual wishes" according to Barbara Gutek.¹²³ This was especially true when NCOs, who held significant power over junior female officers in terms of their careers, as Galloway's example illustrated. Fitzgerald and Clark, in their 1994 study of RCMP members in Burnaby, declared, "The fact that many female officers indicated personal experience with sexual harassment and that the clear majority of it was from supervisors is alarming at the very least." They recommended an "immediate investigation" into the extent of the problem and called for procedures "to assure that rank is not being used as a method of exploiting women in the work-place."¹²⁴ Indeed, eight out of ten female Mounties surveyed had agreed they were sexually harassed on the job by a male supervisor.¹²⁵ Fitzgerald and Clark were further alarmed by the fact that none of these women had turned to formal structural procedures to address the

¹²² Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

¹²³ Barbara A. Gutek, "Sexual Harassment: Rights and Responsibilities," *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal* 6:4 (1993): 328.

¹²⁴ Kathryn Fitzgerald and Mike Clark, *Equality in Policing: A Focus on Gender at Burnaby Detachment of the RCMP*, undergraduate research paper, Simon Fraser University (5 April 1994), 35.

¹²⁵ The survey sample included forty-four female Mounties and sixty-seven male police officers from the detachment. No one above the rank of corporal was surveyed. Fitzgerald and Clark, *Equality in Policing*, 7; Appendix B, Q34. For a discussion on the US example see Sue Carter Collins, "Sexual Harassment and Police Discipline: Who's Policing the Police?" *Policing: An International Journal of Police Strategies and Management* 27:4 (2004): 520.

problem, an indication to the researchers that official policies and complaint mechanisms within the RCMP were a failure.¹²⁶ While the research conducted by Clark and Fitzgerald demonstrated that sexual harassment was still a problem for women in the RCMP in the 1990s, it also indicated that women continued to prefer to manage and negotiate sexual harassment encounters with male police officers on their own.¹²⁷ Even after sexual harassment legislation came into being and the RCMP was moving toward instituting a zero-tolerance policy, female RCMP officers continued to employ a number of informal strategies to cope with sexual harassment. They were less likely to be ostracized or labeled as complainers as a result.

Developing a set of coping strategies was a common practice amongst many women working in policing in western societies. Louise Jackson, in her study of female police officers in Britain, for example, found that female police officers there resorted to a number of self-protection strategies that helped them cope with sexual harassment. Jackson, who conducted oral history interviews, discovered that female police officers usually alternated between a hardline, more masculine performance toward the harasser and feminine displays of innocence or ignorance, both of which “involved the performance of an accepted role or script.”¹²⁸ This was true of the women in the RCMP who also adopted various scripts in response to harassers. For example, some women were not averse to employing physical force, rather than more conventionally feminine behaviour. One male narrator recalled a time when a woman on his watch responded violently to a sexual comment she had received:

She was Russian, I think, and just a real hard temperament. And one of the guys . . . said something inappropriate to her when we were in the locker room one day. She turned around and cold-cocked [punched] him. He hit the floor flat on his back with his feet going. He was out. She was tough enough that she could do that. But it delivered a very strong message to the individual who shot his mouth off.¹²⁹

This female Mountie clearly adopted a masculine performance strategy, thereby transgressing conventional understandings of femininity and taking her colleagues by

¹²⁶ Fitzgerald and Clark, *Equality in Policing*, 35.

¹²⁷ Jackson, *Women Police*, 40.

¹²⁸ Jackson, *Women Police*, 37.

¹²⁹ Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

surprise. The narrator's description of the female Mountie as being "tough enough" and having a "hard temperament" is an indication that her approach was perceived to be more manly than feminine. Nevertheless, her decision to publicly humiliate her male colleague in front of his peers, to let him, and them, know that she would not tolerate harassing comments, was effective.

The use of physical force against a male member of the RCMP was unusual, however, and most female Mounties adopted strategies that were similar to the alternative approaches they utilized on the street when dealing with male civilians. Some were creative and utilized humour to diffuse the unwanted sexual attention. Trish O'Brien recalled that a female friend once used humour to rebuff a sexual advance:

I know one of my friends – she's retired too now – her trainer used to carry a contraceptive in his wallet. And anyway, this night they were on patrol and he said, "Look, I've got this French safe." And she said, "My god, that's been in your wallet there so long I can see the print in the leather!" So she shut him up.¹³⁰

Most of the women who were interviewed adopted attitudes of innocence or feigned ignorance when subjected to sexual advances. O'Brien's first serious encounter with unwanted sexual advances from a senior married officer demonstrates the point:

I remember on one occasion I was working with a member, a married guy, and we were out on patrol. We drove up to this cemetery, I think it was. It was an old road anyways. . . . I knew this guy, I suppose I knew him for maybe a couple of years. Big old teddy bear, a sweet fella. Anyway, next thing he parked the car and he just made a comment like, "You know, if we ever . . . if we had sex here now, no one in the world would ever know about it." You know? "Here we are up here, no one's around, no one's gonna come here, we're safe." He was more or less, it was open to me to say, "Yes, you're right, go for it." . . . But I just made some comment and he knew then that I wasn't biting at this. . . . That's the one that stands out in my mind, was that night on patrol. I was really upset. I never said anything; I just sort of changed the topic. We went on with our patrol. But to me, it was almost like, I thought he was my friend. . . . He was so good to me, I was over to his house. He's just a nice guy, everybody liked him. And just the thought that he would try to take advantage like that, it really hurt me. And that lasted in my mind. . . . If I

¹³⁰ Trish O'Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

talk about it now I can relive that minute. It's almost like I got deceived by a friend.¹³¹

While O'Brien did not recall exactly what she said, she acted in an appropriately feminine way by ignoring the advances and feigning ignorance about what her trainer was implying. Rather than challenging him verbally or complaining to commanding officers, her silence protected the man who everyone liked and respected at the detachment. Whether she decided no one would believe her, or whether she feared retaliation, was unclear during the interview. What was clear from the interview was her shock at being propositioned by an officer whom she trusted. For her, it was not the actual harassment but the sense of betrayal that made the event a traumatic experience, one that stood out in her mind even decades later.

What did male Mounties think of their colleagues who engaged in sexual harassment? Two of the men who were interviewed for this study did not recall directly witnessing female police officers being sexually harassed. According to Bill Jones, an NCO at the time women were being admitted to the RCMP, "I didn't have direct knowledge because I'm the kind of guy that would have done something about it. But I did hear lots of stories."¹³² Similarly, Cameron Montgomery, who was a commissioned officer in the 1970s and 80s, did not directly witness sexual harassment but was "sure that it happened."¹³³ From these responses, it appears that rank played an important role in the sexual harassment of female Mounties. In Jones's case, harassing behaviour was not likely to happen while he was present since he had the inclination, as well as the power, to take punitive action against anyone harassing a female co-worker.¹³⁴ And senior officers like Montgomery were so far removed from the field that they did not witness it or have to deal with it directly. It is unclear whether these officers attempted to change the culture of harassment that was occurring. What is clear from the interview

¹³¹ Trish O'Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

¹³² Bill Jones, interview with author, 3 October 2011.

¹³³ Cameron Montgomery, interview with author, 24 May 2007.

¹³⁴ Researchers have found that men who sexually harass will only do so in certain situations, such as workplaces that tolerate the practice and in other places where those who sexually harass are not held accountable. Harrington and Lonsway, *Investigating Sexual Harassment in Law Enforcement*, 60.

material, though, is that male Mounties of all ranks heard the rumours that it was taking place.

Darryl Butler, a commissioned officer who was stationed in the field, did act on complaints about sexual harassment when he received them from female Mounties under his command. Butler stated, “If you don’t listen and do something [about the complaint] you’re crazy. Anybody that’s in a supervisory position of some sort, if somebody comes to you and says this is going on you’ve got to do something. You cannot turn a blind eye to it.”¹³⁵ He recollected specific situations where he counseled men from the supervisory ranks who were harassing junior women, warning them of the consequences:

I’ve seen staff sergeants, watch commanders, coming on to young female constables on their watch. . . . [They were] persistent, sending emails, letters [even when their advances were rebuffed]. . . . I’ve had some serious discussions with some senior people about [the issue, warning them that] “You’ve got a harassment in the workplace complaint coming your way if you don’t cease and desist. You can’t be doing this. They [the women] don’t want any part of [your advances].”¹³⁶

Given Butler’s rank, he was in a position to challenge higher ranking police officers about their behaviour.

Further complicating the issue, however, was the fact that, as the decades progressed and the awareness of sexual harassment as a workplace issue became more predominant, some female Mounties were not above capitalizing on it in an attempt to garner preferential treatment. According to Butler, “Then of course . . . if you’re addressing performance issues and somebody’s not performing as they should be, then all of a sudden that becomes harassment.” Butler remembered dealing with situations in which supervisors were being accused of harassment by junior female police officers because they did not like the assessment they received.¹³⁷ In those instances, the women in question were complicit in cultivating group blame and in contributing to gender antagonisms within the RCMP.

¹³⁵ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

¹³⁶ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

¹³⁷ Darryl Butler, interview with author, 11 September 2008.

While men like Butler worked to prevent sexual harassment from occurring, many NCOs and commanding officers persisted in tolerating harassment and even harassing young female constables. The prevalence of supervisors sexually harassing lower-ranking women in the RCMP is also seen in other institutions, notably the American military. Psychologists evaluating sexual harassment in the United States have found that women in the military were more likely than men to be harassed by their superior officers, whereas men in the military were more likely to be harassed by their coworkers. In contrast, men who harassed women in civilian workplaces were more likely than women to be coworkers.¹³⁸

Although a majority of the men who harassed female Mounties were supervisors, they were not the only police officers who engaged in the practice. Male Mounties who held the same rank as their female colleagues also utilized harassment tactics. Recent studies on sexual harassment in the 1970s have shown that, while supervisors sexually harassed junior female officers because they were in positions of power over their careers, junior men often harassed their female counterparts because they did not have power or because they feared they were losing it.¹³⁹ The desire to socially control female police officers was a powerful motivator for men in the lower ranks, who found alternative ways to harass, sometimes by cultivating relationships with higher-ranking officers. This is what happened to Jane Hall, who was sexually harassed by her partner following his transfer to North Vancouver, British Columbia. It was not long before reports “of his off-colour behaviours and innuendos soon spread among the female office staff and female members.”¹⁴⁰ Despite the advance warnings, Hall was still taken aback when he gave her a wolf whistle in the squad room one day in front of her peers. Hall verbally challenged him for this behaviour in front of those who were present; it was an action that forced him to change tactics.

¹³⁸ William E. Foote and Jane Goodman-Delahunty, *Evaluating Sexual Harassment: Psychological, Social, and Legal Considerations in Forensic Examinations* (Washington, DC: American Psychological Association, 2005), 28-29.

¹³⁹ Baker, “Race, Class and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s,” 20.

¹⁴⁰ Female public servants and civilian members were also the recipients of unwanted sexual advances from NCOs. In 1996, Sgt. Clive Cannon, a twenty-three-year veteran of the RCMP, allegedly told female civilian staff working in the Fredericton, New Brunswick, customs and excise section that if they wanted their contracts renewed, they were required to provide him with sexual favours. Eight allegations were made by four women. “New Brunswick RCMP Officer Accused of Harassment,” *The Globe and Mail*, 12 September 1996.

Rather than overtly harassing her in front of others, his harassment became more subtle and he resorted to job action as a form of retaliation. He forced Hall to handle all of the investigations by absenting himself from “well over ninety percent of the calls” the partners received during a shift. Hall remembered that the “new staff sergeant, who was my partner’s constant coffee companion, turned a blind eye to the locker room attacks and the constant dumping of files on me.”¹⁴¹ The added stress of handling all of the investigations in addition to her responsibilities as a trainer finally motivated Hall to complain about her partner to the station NCO. As a result, she was assigned to a new watch and a new partner within a week. Hall’s example is important because it illustrates how harassers sometimes developed rapport with NCOs, who then became complicit in the systemic harassment of female police officers. It also shows that it was the women who were usually transferred after making a complaint rather than the male officer, allowing the harasser to continue his behaviour unchecked.

Marital status did not preclude men from sexually harassing women in the RCMP, a characteristic that emerges in a number of psychological studies of men who harass women.¹⁴² Many of the men who engaged in harassing behaviour were married. Cherise Marchand remembered fending off more than one married man during her service. On one occasion, she was being dropped off at home one morning by her sergeant following a shift. Marchand, who was dating someone at the time, recollected:

[B]asically he tells me “I want to come in.” I said, “No, you’re a married man and I’m dating someone.” “Well,” he said, “don’t let that come in the way. My wife and I, things are not working out anyhow,” and all of this. I told him, “It doesn’t matter. Like, what I think also matters. I don’t want to have anything to do with you. Just leave me alone.” But no, it was, to them, okay, my marriage is not working, so I’ll just go with the closest person. . . . I’m dating someone and I’m faithful. I don’t care if you’re not. It doesn’t have anything to do with me.¹⁴³

When asked whether she filed any type of harassment complaint against the men who made sexual advances, Marchand responded, “Well, today I would. In those days, I was told I couldn’t. There was nothing I could do.” At the time, the DSRR program was in its

¹⁴¹ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 187-89.

¹⁴² Foote and Goodman-Delahunty, *Evaluating Sexual Harassment*, 117.

¹⁴³ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

infancy and the representatives were located in another jurisdiction, making it difficult for Marchand to meet with them to file a complaint. Marchand was also told by senior ranking officers at the detachment that “they had more important things to do than listen to me” and that she should just roll with the punches if she wanted to work in a man’s world.¹⁴⁴

In the RCMP, some male Mounties assumed female police officers would welcome their sexual advances. For example, Marianne Robson recalled that at her first posting, the sexual advances she received were plentiful:

It was rampant. They’d show up at my apartment. Married members and single members. And I’d tell them to get lost. I think they thought it was their right. I made it clear it was not their right. Actually, I remember being at a promotion party . . . probably one of my first ones I was at, and a fella from a neighbouring detachment . . . he came up to me and grabbed my ass. I said, “Don’t you ever put your fucking hands on me again.” That was his right. . . . There were tons of advances.¹⁴⁵

Perhaps the men at this particular detachment assumed that female Mounties were interested in sexual encounters with them in much the same way that they assumed civilian women responded to the handsome hero dressed in that nice red coat. It is also possible that they were interested in a romantic relationship with a female police officer because she understood police work in ways that female civilians did not. Indeed, there is research that demonstrates that physical attraction and the potential for a romantic relationship was one reason married men were seen as sexually harassing younger women in the workplace.¹⁴⁶ Accordingly, it should not be entirely discounted as one reason for the occurrence of sexual harassment in the RCMP. However, according to Lonsway and Harrington, “most cases of sexual harassment do not involve any effort to gain sexual favours” but are an attempt to humiliate or subordinate women, and to remind them they are not wanted in the workplace.¹⁴⁷ This was most likely the case for Robson. While she may have thought that her male co-workers viewed sex with her as

¹⁴⁴ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008. It was an attitude that existed in a number of male-dominated industries. See Baker, “Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s,” 17-18.

¹⁴⁵ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

¹⁴⁶ Foote and Goodman-Delahunty, *Evaluating Sexual Harassment*, 117.

¹⁴⁷ Harrington and Lonsway, “Investigating Sexual Harassment,” 5.

their “right” as fellow Mounties, there was more at play than an interest in a sexual relationship with her. Given the number of men who made advances, the issue was one of power and the exercise of masculine aggression toward a young woman. Power was also the motivation behind the objectification of Robson’s body at the promotion party, where the male police officer’s sexual touching positioned her as unsuitable as a police officer, destabilizing her credibility as a Mountie.

Sexual harassment took many forms in the RCMP, but the most common were crude comments and sexual jokes.¹⁴⁸ The use of crude comments to harass female Mounties was a form of social retaliation employed by male police officers. Pam Osborne recalled being sexually harassed at her first posting. “One of the male members I used to work with, uh, [there was] a lot of sexual innuendo, hugging . . . and references to my breasts as cantaloupes. Stuff like that.” Despite the fact that there was an ongoing investigation of sexual harassment at this particular detachment at the time, Osborne thought twice about complaining since this police officer did not find it necessary to change his behaviour even while others were under investigation for the same offense.¹⁴⁹ Research conducted by Jennifer Brown in the early 1990s confirmed that “[n]on-professional conduct such as profanity may increase the likelihood of women being treated as sex objects by a factor of three compared to environments where obscene language is not tolerated. When sexual joking is common, women are seven times more likely to be stereotyped in terms of their status as sex objects.”¹⁵⁰ This was certainly Osborne’s experience, whose body was objectified by references to her breasts. It is true that male Mounties also made sexual comments to their male peers which were seldom interpreted as sexual harassment. However, according to Kurtz, “Even jokes that target male officers are likely demeaning toward women,” such as a male officer calling another male a “pussy” or a “bitch.”¹⁵¹ Sexual comments made by male Mounties to other men did not objectify men’s bodies in the same way that references to Osborne’s breasts did.

¹⁴⁸ It was commonplace in most police departments in western societies. See Ott, “Effects of the Male-Female Ratio at Work,” 50; Kurtz, “Controlled Burn,” 234.

¹⁴⁹ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

¹⁵⁰ Brown, “Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment in the Police,” speaking notes, 6. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

¹⁵¹ Kurtz, “Controlled Burn,” 234.

Crude jokes and sexual comments were also meant to ostracize and exclude women from police culture. Trish O'Brien recalled that there were lots of sexist jokes and bad language being used in the workplace: "Depending on the personality, we knew some of the members were pigs. And you just take them with a grain of salt, you know, the language and the comments."¹⁵² "There's always the jokes" remembered Shelly Evans, and there was "that fine line where [you think] 'How much am I going to put up with and laugh off?' I mean, I take a joke well anyway. So a lot of it really didn't bother me, whereas I think a lot of it might have bothered other people. But there always seemed to be that line and people definitely knew when they crossed it [with me]."¹⁵³ Sexual jokes allowed male police officers to belittle women "under the protective guise of humour," while asserting their masculinity in the workplace.¹⁵⁴

According to the authors of a 1994 study of members of the Burnaby RCMP detachment in British Columbia, a majority of the female respondents agreed with the statement that "office-room banter is sometimes offensive to female police officers." When male police officers were asked the same question, there was an equally divided response between agreement and disagreement.¹⁵⁵ These findings not only suggested that women thought office banter was more offensive than men did, but that at least half of the male respondents while recognizing that it was offensive, engaged in the practice anyway. But in a related question, when asked whether "women have come to tolerate sexist behaviour as part of the job," a majority of male officers disagreed with the statement. The authors also found that the male respondents disagreed that sexual harassment was commonplace in the RCMP.¹⁵⁶ Differences between male and female perceptions of what constituted sexual harassment clearly existed, and some male police officers seemed to be unaware of the power differential that undergirded the reception of these jokes as sexual harassment.

When Janice Murdoch had received sexual comments as a junior police officer, she had not known how to respond or what action to take. It was not until she became

¹⁵² Trish O'Brien, telephone interview with author, 13 November 2008.

¹⁵³ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁵⁴ Kurtz, "Controlled Burn," 234.

¹⁵⁵ Fitzgerald and Clark, *Equality in Policing*, 14.

¹⁵⁶ Fitzgerald and Clark, *Equality in Policing*, 15.

more senior in service that she decided to file a formal complaint against one particular supervisor who had made derogatory comments about her at a public gathering:

The comments, whether they were of a sexual nature or not, they were derogatory and they were insulting and they were inappropriate for where we were. . . . And he was a supervisor at the time and it was inappropriate. Reluctantly, I got help. I actually had to go above the supervisor to headquarters. . . . It was in a location, in a venue with other people around us that may or may not have been police officers, may or may not have been [commanding] officers, and police officers from other [police] departments. Like, I wasn't sure because everybody was in civilian clothes. . . . [But] there were a lot of obviously high [ranking] officers and he made a comment about my physical appearance and loud enough that everybody could hear. . . . The other police officers that I knew around me, they all joked and thought it was funny. I thought, you know, if I stood up and said, "Fuck you, you're an idiot!" then I would have been chastised. So I was in a position where he got away with it, I couldn't respond to it, and I don't know who's around. So the people that were around me, they could have an effect on my career, they could be my next bosses, they could know my boss. . . . So I was really backed in a corner. . . . He was being investigated for something else at the time of a sexual nature and he knew [that] I knew [about it]. And I think it was a way of keeping me in my place.¹⁵⁷

The derogatory comments about Murdoch was one way this supervisor worked to reinforce ideas of female inferiority, a notion supported by the other male officers who were present, given their laughter. His demeaning remarks were meant to publicly shame Murdoch for transgressing occupational boundaries. They also excluded her from the camaraderie of the informal peer network that was operating between the men at the social function.

When asked if this particular man was still a member of the RCMP, Murdoch replied "Yeah, oh yeah [laughing]. Don't even go there," implying that formal complaints and disciplinary proceedings had very little impact on the careers of supervisors who sexually harassed junior female officers, even after multiple complaints were leveled against them. In this way, the RCMP was complicit in perpetuating the problem, creating a hostile work environment where women had little recourse in spite of the fact that complaint mechanisms were in place. Sexual comments and banter signaled to women that they were unwelcome and excluded from a workplace "controlled by individuals who

¹⁵⁷ Janice Murdoch, interview with author, 17 April 2008.

[were] hostile to them and unwilling to alter their offensive behavior.”¹⁵⁸ Informal police culture allowed repeat offenders to survive with their careers intact, lending credence to the idea that sexual harassment in the RCMP was systemic.

Apart from sexist jokes and crude remarks, sexual harassment took more obvious physical forms. This approach was the most direct way to exclude a woman from police culture, which explains, in part, why some male police officers persisted in the behaviour despite being warned not to continue. Shelly Evans recounted two instances of being sexually harassed by the same male police officer, even after she had challenged his behaviour:

I had a co-worker in one detachment and I don't know what the hell was wrong with him. It was very bizarre. . . . I came back from leave or whatever, and I was working. I was filling out paperwork and [he said], "Hey, you're back from holiday!" Slap, right on the ass in front of a prisoner. And you're just like, "What the hell was that?" So we went and had a little discussion, and he was just totally mystified why that would be a problem [for me]. . . . This same guy, he said [on another occasion], "Yeah, I got this complaint where this woman is alleging that this guy did this," which involved him again grabbing my butt. He says, "Do you think that?" And, I'm like, "Are you serious? First of all, get your hands off me." It's the same guy and I think that he was a little nuts.¹⁵⁹

This male officer objectified and shamed Evans by slapping and grabbing her buttocks. Shaming was a powerful means of social control for this man, who employed it on more than one occasion. Evans recalled another incident with the same police officer, this time during her non-working hours:

We're at a detachment curling bonspiel. . . . My parents were there watching 'cause they lived close by. He was curling on the team with the detachment commander and he comes off the ice and I'm standing there, and he ends up putting his [curling] broom up between my legs and goosing me. And I turned around and shoved him, and I knocked him over two garbage pails and said, "Stop touching me!" And everybody was

¹⁵⁸ Merry Morash and Robin N. Haarr, "Gender, Workplace Problems, and Stress in Policing," *Justice Quarterly* 12:1 (1995): 132.

¹⁵⁹ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

almost like, “Wow, I can’t believe that you reacted that way.” So, I mean, it’s ignored. So you gotta deal with a lot of it yourself.¹⁶⁰

The fact that this male officer did not curtail his harassing behaviour, even in front of the detachment commander or Evans’s parents, suggests that he was intent on drawing attention to his perception of Evans’s subordinate status as a woman and a police officer. The response of Evans’s colleagues to the incident illustrates that her sexual objectification was considered normative behaviour that did not merit the level of violence that Evans meted out in return. Given that the men of the RCMP understood that female Mounties were trained in the use of force, it is somewhat surprising that they did not anticipate a physical response from some of them while they were being harassed. At any rate, this specific event confirms that many male police officers underplayed the significance of sexually suggestive contact as harassment and dismissed crude gestures as natural behaviour by men. In reality, sexual harassment was a form of discrimination that communicated to others that female Mounties were not to be taken seriously as police officers.

The male Mountie’s repeated harassment of Evans sustained the inequalities that existed between men and women in the RCMP, inequalities that were dependent on conventional formulations of women as sexual objects who were physically weak and overly emotional. When asked why she thought this officer’s behaviour was tolerated, and why sexual harassment in general persisted in the RCMP, Evans offered this explanation:

I think it’s probably a mix of things. We still have the old boys and the old boys’ club still struggles to live. The old boys. And we say, “Well, we’ve got all these young men in that [they] have been raised in an environment that, you know, women are equal, and all that.” But they’re taught. Here they are, these macho policemen coming out, and these NCOs, senior people, and this is a behaviour being displayed and it’s accepted.¹⁶¹

For Evans, the problem of sexual harassment was reproduced and accepted as normal so frequently in police culture that younger men entering the RCMP adopted the

¹⁶⁰ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008.

¹⁶¹ Shelly Evans, interview with author, 30 July 2008

practice, despite coming from a younger generation that was presumed to be more cognizant of human rights and women's changing status in society.

Male RCMP officers also used references to menstruation as a form of sexual harassment. As historian Christabelle Sethna argues, feminine hygiene products were frequently utilized as symbols that objectified women and their bodies.¹⁶² Marianne Robson recalled working with a woman from the second troop of female Mounties who arrived at her detachment six months after Robson. This woman experienced sexual harassment that Robson described as "horrible":

The second gal [to be posted at the detachment], they overtly sexually harassed. Actually, there was one male member who sexually harassed her to the point where I think that's why she left the force. Um, he would leave Kotex pads in her [mail] slot at work. And then she'd come and talk to me. . . . [I told her] "[You] gotta go with it, don't let it bother you. He's just trying to get your goat. He only does it because you react to it. Try not to react to it." Right? But as far as even thinking about going any further with that, because everybody knew it was going on. I mean everybody, right up to the officers. They knew it was going on. Everybody thought it was a big joke. Right? But then it was only the two of us [women], and again, if you start creating waves and ripples, I mean the force is a big, big organization.¹⁶³

By leaving a feminine hygiene product in a public place, the male police officer shamed the female Mountie by pointing to her biological difference as justification for her exclusion from the occupation. Robson was relieved she was not subjected to the same level of harassment, but she was very aware that if she chose to make waves and complain on behalf of her new female colleague, she could also expect retaliation. Because the detachment's commanding officers and NCOs were cognizant of the harassment, and complicit in allowing it to continue, this female police officer had little recourse but to resign after a year and a half of service. Her experience illustrates how male Mounties targeted specific women to harass without consequences to their own careers. By harassing one woman, the men at this detachment effectively silenced both.

¹⁶² Christabelle Sethna, "Chastity Outmoded!": The Ubyssy, Sex, and the Single Girl, 1960-70," *Creating Postwar Canada: Community, Diversity, and Dissent*, eds. Magda Fahrni and Robert Rutherford (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008): 305.

¹⁶³ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

The shame associated with menstruation was based on the social imperative that women were to conceal the menstrual process. As a result, feminine hygiene products were symbols of exclusion that implied that women were disruptive and disorderly by nature of their biology. The menstruating body was contrasted with the ideal male Mountie body that was masculine, rational, strong, and virile. Bodily difference grounded ideas of inequality within the RCMP, and discourses about menstruation reminded women of their subordinate status as police officers. In the 1970s, menstruation figured prominently in arguments made by commanding officers in other jurisdictions as a central reason for excluding women. In Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1976, for example, the city's police commissioner stated in a deposition in a discrimination suit filed against the department that, due to "periods in their life when they are psychologically unbalanced because of physical problems that are occurring within them," women were unsuitable as police officers.¹⁶⁴ Understandings of menstruation as rendering women incapable of rational thought was a discourse grounded in social convention rather than scientific data; nevertheless, it was a discourse that was adopted by the men of the RCMP as an informal means of regulating female police officers.

Pornography was another source of sexual harassment that female police officers experienced in the 1970s and 80s, one that was also utilized by men in other male-dominated occupations such as the mining and construction industries.¹⁶⁵ During the 1970s, most women found pornographic photographs and videos of nude women or women engaged in sexual acts offensive and insulting – especially if they appeared in the workplace. This was due, in part, to a growing awareness of sexual harassment in Canadian society as women's rights activists "protested the sexual objectification and exploitation of women."¹⁶⁶ Yet, in the RCMP, an environment where heterosexuality was valued as an expression of manliness, the viewing of pornography in the workplace was considered normative behaviour. Following the arrival of female Mounties, however, it was used as an informal means of regulating the sexuality of female police officers.

¹⁶⁴ Joseph F. O'Neill quoted in "Despite Some Gains, Female Cops Still Find Too Few Cracks in the Glass Ceiling," 9.

¹⁶⁵ Baker, "Race, Class, and Sexual Harassment in the 1970s," 16.

¹⁶⁶ Carrie N. Baker, *The Women's Movement Against Sexual Harassment* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 177.

Cherise Marchand's example illustrates the ways in which pornography was strategically used to make female Mounties uncomfortable in the force. She recalled, "One day I showed up at work and there was this, um, *Playgirl* magazine in my basket. It was just to see how I'd react to it, I guess. If I was interested in this stuff, I'd buy it. Why [would they do that]? What would they say if I was to put a *Playboy* magazine in their basket? And they wouldn't always identify themselves, either."¹⁶⁷ *Playgirl* was known at the time for its nude centerfolds of men, and Marchand was being monitored to determine if she was sexually oriented toward men. But there was more going on than sexual harassment in this instance. As the next chapter will show, remaining unemotional when under pressure was a core value of RCMP culture and a sign of professionalism. Female Mounties were sometimes harassed in an effort to determine if they were capable of meeting masculine standards of professionalism when being provoked.

Leslie Clark recalled a pornographic video being shown at one detachment following the end of a nightshift:

I went into the squad room and there was a porn film playing. . . . I just didn't think it was appropriate to have, and you know, this is full-blown [porn]. This is not fake and [the actors are] going at it type of thing. And everyone is just sort of sitting around watching it. . . . I'm like, okay, I'm sitting here. Okay, should I pretend that I like it, or pretend that I don't like it, or should I just sit here and watch it with everybody? And I thought, "This is kind of stupid. Why are we doing this? Why are we watching this anyway?" . . . There was about fifteen or twenty people there. . . . At the time I didn't feel comfortable in going up and turning off the television set.¹⁶⁸

Clark left the squad room. While she found the film offensive, she feared retaliation and ostracization if she vocalized her resistance to the objectification of women by turning the video off. She also recalled the pornographic posters and calendars that were present in the same squad room:

There were the whole *Playboy* posters and nude women calendars and all that [in the 1970s], but even in the early 90s I found that all started to change. . . . Like posters and that, nobody had, like, a full-size poster on

¹⁶⁷ Cherise Marchand, interview with author, 15 October 2008.

¹⁶⁸ Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

the wall. It was mostly personal calendars on someone's desk but of course, back then, we'd share desks. We didn't have cubicles and we had generally, you know, four or five desks shoved together in a giant table formation. So there wouldn't be anything [too obvious] but maybe in the corner. So it wasn't really in your face that much [as it was in previous decades].¹⁶⁹

Although the images were not blatantly positioned, they were nonetheless there and noticeable to Clark. Clark's experiences illustrate how, at times, the women of the RCMP were subjected to mindless insensitivity rather than overt sexual harassment. Nevertheless, pornography was one way to reinforce heterosexuality as normative in police culture, and viewing it was a ritualistic performance that positioned masculinity as the dominant identity for police officers. Furthermore, pornography in the workplace also sent a message to female Mounties about their standing as sexual objects rather than authority figures. It also communicated their exclusion from activities where masculinity was ritualistically performed through the viewing of material that exploited women.

Women employed by other police departments also experienced harassment in the form of sexual photographic images of women. The fact that some male police officers viewed women as objects is best illustrated by Jill Ryan, a member of the OPP, who attended a sexual assault course at the Ontario Police College (OPC). One of the presenters, a Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) profiler, delivered a highly offensive lecture using photographs of slain sex workers. According to Ryan:

He discussed four different profiles augmenting his presentation with three hours of photos showing the vaginas of slain women. And because most of them were prostitutes, it was condoned and even applauded. But I thought it was obscene and totally irrelevant to the presentation. How does staring at a vagina help one determine a sexual offender's profile? These were victims that were being re-victimized in death. Apparently, I was the only person in the room of 124 that expressed this point of view. But to their credit, someone at OPC read my comments and agreed. I was invited to help re-design the course content.¹⁷⁰

Since the sex trade was regulated by the state and the police, police officers had a vested interest in the control and monitoring of sex trade workers, control that

¹⁶⁹ Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

¹⁷⁰ Jill Ryan, email communication with author, 27 May 2010.

dehumanized them even in death. The fact that the photographs were condoned and applauded by the men who were present illustrates the degree to which the female body was objectified by male law enforcement officers across police departments. Significantly, it also demonstrates how shared values in police culture were reinforced and reproduced between law enforcement agencies.

The sexual objectification of women did not only apply to the women of the RCMP but extended to female civilians as well. In particular, women were viewed as sexual conquests by the men of the RCMP's Musical Ride, who participated in a sexualized ritual that reinforced their identity as ideally masculine. Kate Morton was one of the first women selected to join the Musical Ride in 1980. At the time, the RCMP replaced half of the members of the Musical Ride each year, and Morton was selected from the second group of female Mounties who applied to attend equitation training. But Morton turned the position down after hearing rumours about what went on during the Ride's national and international tours. She recalled learning that the men of the Musical Ride liked to hold "lawnmower competitions" while touring. The competitions were premised on the idea that female members of the public were enamoured with the handsome hero dressed in red serge. The plan involved two members of the Ride who worked to engage with a local woman from the community they were visiting. One Mountie would attempt to interest her in him romantically. A second Mountie would then try to steal her away from the first Mountie, or attempt to "mow" his grass. The competition was won if the second Mountie successfully stole the woman away from the first Mountie and engaged her in a sexual encounter. For Morton, rumours about lawnmower competitions were an ominous sign that she would be "given a rough time as a female" member of the Musical Ride. The view of women as sexual objects served as a warning to her about the highly gendered culture of the Musical Ride, strengthening her feeling that she would be better off staying in her current posting.¹⁷¹ Lawnmower competitions revealed the extent to which heterosexual conquest and female objectification were not only normalized but ritualized by male Mounties.

¹⁷¹ Kate Morton, interview with author, 26 February 2008. In 2013, S/Sgt. Caroline O'Farrell filed a multi-million dollar lawsuit against the RCMP for more than "100 substantiated incidents of assault or abuse that occurred" while she was a member of the Musical Ride in the 1980s. Andrew Seymour, "Mountie Sues RCMP, Senior Officers Over Alleged Abuse While She Was on Musical Ride Team," *Ottawa Citizen*, 21 May 2013.

The women of the RCMP were also subjected to sexual harassment from members of the public. Janet Porter's first visit to a prison took place in 1975, when she was a recruit just out of training. Porter, who was just nineteen at the time, responded with her partner to a call at a nearby penitentiary. Porter recollected, "I do remember going into a prison. That was a memorable experience. My partner and I went in and he said, 'You stay close to me.' And of course, all the guys [inmates] came out of their prison cells. It was two storeys. And they were making all these rude noises. And, uh, that was scary. They were all looking at me like I was a piece of meat."¹⁷² To the inmates, Porter was still a woman and fair game for sexual harassment, even though she was wearing a police uniform. It was likely that the inmates had never seen a female Mountie before. To Porter's male partner, she was in need of protection from the inmates, whose response to a young female Mountie obviously made him uneasy.

Pam Osborne's experiences with sexual harassment from a member of the public were more graphic in nature. According to Osborne, "You get comments all the time from the public. . . . I'd get asked out on dates [by men I was arresting]. One gentleman, we were booking him into cells and he showed me a picture of his brand new girlfriend, except it was her exposed vagina that was in the picture. But that was more for shock . . . basically that was shock value to see if they could shock me. If I was shocked, then it was kind of like they won." Male civilians sometimes responded to female Mounties as sexual objects rather than figures of civic authority, and many retaliated for being placed under arrest by a woman by sexually harassing them. Osborne recalled another occasion when a male prisoner taunted her sexually following his arrest and then complained about her treatment of him:

One older gentleman in my second detachment . . . [I was] booking him into the cells and, you know, he's groping. A sixty-five year old grandfather groping himself, stripping in front of me you know, flopping around his penis in his hands, trying to whatever. Then he had the nerve to turn around and lay a complaint against me for the way he'd been handled [during the arrest]. My . . . sergeant pulled me aside and said that this was the issue: it was more about you, I hadn't followed his rights. He didn't know why he was being booked in. I told him the story of what had happened in the cells in front of me and the male member and the male guards [and] sheriffs. We responded to his lawyer that "This was the circumstance. This was how his client was behaving. And by the way, did

¹⁷² Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

we mention that Cst. Osborne is a female?" We never heard another word after that [about the complaint].¹⁷³

Fortunately for Osborne, there were a number of witnesses to the accused's behaviour.

Members of the legal profession were not above sexually harassing female police officers either. They also viewed female police officers as sexually transgressive and open to sexual overtures. Marlene Watson, hired in 1964 as a member of the Toronto police force, recalled being groped by a judge when she was twenty-four years old. Her testimony about his behaviour resulted in his being removed from the judiciary.¹⁷⁴ Similarly, some female Mounties experienced lawyers who relied on gendered understandings of women working in a male-dominated organization as transgressive in an effort to manipulate them. Leslie Clark recalled one lawyer in eastern Canada who attempted to have charges against his client dropped by appealing to what he perceived to be Clark's inability to control her sexuality:

Oh yeah, there was one scumbag lawyer. The guy actually called me up. I couldn't believe it. . . . His client . . . he was an ex-member of the [city] police force, and I discovered that he committed passport fraud. . . . I was going after him for having made a false declaration on his passport. . . . His lawyer called up and, uh, he totally tried to schmooze me. It was disgusting. He was dripping. He was so obsequious. . . . What he said was . . . "You know, my client is a very handsome man and I'm sure if you saw him, this would all be dealt with." Like implying that I would look at him and swoon and things would be done with.¹⁷⁵

The lawyer's effort to proposition Clark on behalf of his client was an attempt to cloud her judgement and was based on the assumption that she would be overwhelmed by her "natural" sexual urges. The proposition also called into question her ability to behave as a rational figure of authority.

Some female police officers also experienced a more serious form of sexual harassment: sexual assault. Female RCMP officers tended to handle sexual assaults in the same way they dealt with sexual harassment: most did not report the incident.

¹⁷³ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 28 October 2006.

¹⁷⁴ Joe Fiorito, "Retiring Cop Broke Limits for Women," *Toronto Star*, 30 January 2008.

¹⁷⁵ Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

Carolyn Harper was aware of one sexual assault of a female Mountie: “I know of a sexual assault. But that person never went forward. . . . And then when it did come out later on, [she] totally denied it. Like [she] just didn’t want to have anything to do with it and still totally denied the fact that it happened.” According to Harper, the male Mountie involved also denied that a sexual assault had taken place. The female police officer resigned. Harper speculated about why the woman failed to report it to commanding officers, stating that women in the RCMP resisted reporting an assault for the same reasons female civilians refused to lodge a sexual assault complaint; they did not want others to know about the assault for fear of retaliation or reluctance to have their social and sexual lives bared to public scrutiny.¹⁷⁶

The extent of the sexual harassment of female Mounties was finally exposed in 1986, when *The Province* (Vancouver) broke a story about rampant sexual harassment and sexism in the RCMP. Six female Mounties from British Columbia detachments made the claim that sexual harassment was the reason why they and other female police officers were resigning in unprecedented numbers, at a rate that was five times higher than that of men.¹⁷⁷ According to Jane Hall, the article in *The Province* originated with some off-the-record comments made during a social gathering.¹⁷⁸ The women subsequently agreed to be interviewed by the journalist on condition that they, and their detachments, remain anonymous. Female Mounties exercised their agency by using the media to their advantage to expose the sexism and discrimination that thrived behind the RCMP’s heroic image. The Canadian Press picked up the story, which garnered national and international attention. According to the *Regina Leader-Post*,

[The women] told a Vancouver newspaper last week of corporals and sergeants who tried to coerce them into bed or played crude sex jokes on them. “I’ve had male members park outside my house so they could tell everybody who I was dating and who stayed overnight” said one woman. . . . “I got tired of being propositioned by senior officers who thought you were a lesbian if you didn’t or a slut if you did,” said another woman in her late 20s. She quit the force after five years. . . . “When I complained, I

¹⁷⁶ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010. Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, in an autobiographical account of her tenure as an RCMP officer, described being sexually assaulted by a male Mountie while stationed in Selkirk, Manitoba, in 1993. See Sherry Lee Benson-Podolchuk, *Women Not Wanted* (Winnipeg, MB: Hignell Book Printing, 2007).

¹⁷⁷ “Minister Wants Investigation,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 January 1986.

¹⁷⁸ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 238.

was told I had an attitude problem.” Wives of male officers made life difficult for a third policewoman until she got married. “The wives were unbelievable,” said the woman, now 27. “They were all convinced you were sleeping with their husband. Some of the men even told their wives that to get more attention.” . . . RCMP records show that between January, 1983 and January, 1985 the force hired 69 women. But during the same two-year span it lost 68 out of a total 458 women through resignations.¹⁷⁹

These experiences illustrate the ways in which the sexuality of female Mounties was monitored, not only by the men of the RCMP, but also by some of their wives.

The next day, Canada’s solicitor general Perrin Beatty issued a statement to the media. Beatty emphasized that the federal government would “not tolerate sexual harassment within the RCMP” and ordered Commr. Robert Simmonds to investigate the claims made by the women in British Columbia.¹⁸⁰ The commissioner convened a hastily-organized meeting of female Mounties in Vancouver and sent his representative from Ottawa to report back on the meeting. In addition to a discussion about sexual harassment, the women present raised issues such as unpaid leave for family reasons and job-sharing. They also complained about the female uniform, particularly the pillbox hat and the regulation preventing women from wearing the same uniform as male officers, specifically breeches and boots.¹⁸¹

Despite government promises of swift action, police culture did not change and the sexual harassment of female RCMP officers continued. Unlike the six female Mounties who went public with their complaints, some female Mounties who resisted sexual advances lost their careers. For example, in 1993 Alice Clark sued the RCMP for discrimination. Clark was “hounded, abused, and harassed” by her RCMP colleagues and supervisors at the detachment in Red Deer, Alberta, between 1981 and 1987. Clark, who was frequently referred to as a “bitch” and a “meter maid,” was grabbed one day by a male police officer, who kissed her in the office. “He told me to call him when my

¹⁷⁹ “Women Members of the RCMP Claim Sexual Harassment and Sexism,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 20 January 1986. Also see “Across Canada Female Mounties Say Sexism is Rife,” *The Globe and Mail*, 20 January 1986; “Mounties Accused of Sexual Harassment,” *The Times* (London), 21 January 1986.

¹⁸⁰ “Beatty Orders Probe of Sexism Charges by Female Mounties,” *The Globe and Mail*, 21 January 1986; “Minister Wants Investigation,” *Regina Leader-Post*, 21 January 1986.

¹⁸¹ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 237-38.

husband was away if I wanted a real man.” She also recalled male officers viewing pornographic videos at the office, despite protests from Clark and the other women working at the detachment. She resigned in 1987.¹⁸²

The RCMP, perhaps sensing the possibility of ongoing litigation problems, finally began to take notice of female attrition rates. As one media report opined, “The Mounties may always get their man, it’s the women they’re having trouble with.”¹⁸³ A few months following the initial complaints in British Columbia, the police force began to conduct audits of their policies and practices concerning female recruitment. The authors of one audit relied on RCMP statistics of women who had resigned from the police force between 1975 and 1985. They determined that 43 percent of women had resigned compared with 24 percent of men who had joined the RCMP during the same period. But the problem of attrition was attributed to recruiting problems and the inability of women to meet physical fitness standards, rather than sexual harassment or sexism. The report’s authors claimed that “many women leave because they’re more interested in raising a family while men quit out of job frustration,” a gendered assumption that a career in the RCMP was just a sideline for women until they married.¹⁸⁴ The idea was a throwback to previous decades, when the term “worker” was a highly gendered term that excluded women. Since women’s work was viewed as temporary and undertaken only until marriage, it was deemed less skilled and undeserving of equal pay.¹⁸⁵

The auditors sidestepped the issue of sexual harassment altogether, insisting that it was “not a problem since the RCMP began holding workshops across the country in February 1994” to address the issue.¹⁸⁶ They also maintained that “female Mounties

¹⁸² Alice Clark quoted in Kerry Segrave, *Policewomen: A History* (London: McFarland & Company, 1995), 170.

¹⁸³ “Female Mounties Quit at Twice the Rate of Men: Audit of the Force’s Employment Equity Program Shows that Nearly Half of Female Applicants Fail Fitness Test,” *The Globe and Mail*, 12 August 1996.

¹⁸⁴ “Female Mounties Quit at Twice the Rate of Men.”

¹⁸⁵ Bender, “Too Much Distasteful Masculinity,” 98. Also see Sangster, *Transforming Labour*, 20-22.

¹⁸⁶ By the 1990s, most employers in the United States and Canada had policies against harassment or offered training to “sensitize workers” to the issue. Baker, *The Women’s Movement Against Sexual Harassment*, 189.

describe it as a non-issue” within the RCMP.¹⁸⁷ Given my interview material, however, it was an issue for the women of the RCMP in the 1970s and 80s. In fairness to the auditors, they did recommend that the RCMP actually ask the women who were resigning for their reasons for doing so. However, this common-sense suggestion was “squashed by senior management unsure of the validity of the results or what reactions the question would evoke,” suggesting that commanding officers continued to ignore the pervasiveness of sexual harassment.¹⁸⁸ The RCMP’s reluctance to ask the women why they were resigning was motivated by fear of exposure of the unethical and less-than-heroic treatment of female Mounties by the men of the RCMP. The persistent refusal of the police force’s commanding officers to publicly acknowledge the problem or address it internally contributed to its systemic nature.

The RCMP was clearly aware that sexual harassment was a growing problem, evidenced by the number of internal studies that were underway by the 1990s. In 1996, the *Calgary Herald* obtained an RCMP study under the government’s *Access to Information Act*. In that review, six out of ten female Mounties surveyed admitted to experiencing some form of sexual harassment on the job.¹⁸⁹ The public exposure of the extent of sexual harassment within the RCMP by the *Calgary Herald* pushed the police force to warn its members of a potential public backlash. In a pre-emptive strike against the news story that was scheduled to break on 27 September, the RCMP’s director of personnel, Asst. Commr. Dave Cleveland, issued a broadcast to all members of the RCMP on 23 September, warning of “events that will unfold in the media over the next few days and weeks” regarding the issue. Cleveland assured members of the RCMP across Canada that the police force was taking measures to address sexual

¹⁸⁷ “Female Mounties Quit at Twice the Rate of Men.” The idea that sexual harassment was a non-issue for female Mounties was likely a reference to a report by Gail Walker on the status of women in policing commissioned by Public Security Canada a year earlier in 1993. Walker found that a majority of her female survey respondents did not consider sexual harassment “a major problem” since they could effectively deal with the incidents themselves. However, eight percent of Walker’s respondents did consider it a major problem, while a clear majority felt that “better definitions of harassment needed to be developed along with clearer policies for dealing with such situations,” suggesting that the women wanted help in defending themselves against harassment through official avenues. Walker, *The Status of Women in Canadian Policing*, xviii.

¹⁸⁸ “Female Mounties Quit at Twice the Rate of Men.”

¹⁸⁹ “Female RCMP Officers Sexually Harassed at Work: Six Out of 10 Surveyed Were Affected, Internal Study Says,” *The Globe and Mail*, 27 September 1996.”

harassment, including “mandatory harassment awareness training courses for all employees and a review of the RCMP’s transfer policy.” He also announced that the RCMP had voluntarily entered into an employment equity agreement with the Canadian Human Rights Commission and was committed to ensuring that 32 percent of the cadets entering Regina for training were women.¹⁹⁰ Little attention was paid to sexual harassment as an expression of power or to re-evaluating the attitudes of NCOs who modeled sexual harassment as appropriate behaviour for each new generation of recruit being hired.

Whether or not the RCMP completely followed through on its promise to introduce mandatory harassment awareness training for all of its employees is unclear. What is known is that the sexual harassment of female Mounties was ongoing.¹⁹¹ The police force continued to focus on the experience of harassment rather than the power relations at play within police culture and the gendered view of policing as a masculine occupation. The desire of commanding officers to protect the image of the RCMP as a Canadian icon and as ideally masculine enabled the practice to continue. By the time that Cleveland broadcast his assurances, sexual harassment was valued as an exceptionally effective strategy within police culture for pressuring female Mounties and eventually pushing them out of the occupation. Attrition rates for female police officers, in combination with oral testimonies of female members of the force, confirm that sexual harassment created a toxic and hostile work environment for many of the women working for the RCMP.

Conclusion

For the RCMP, as for most other police departments in western countries in the 1970s and 80s, the sexualization of the workplace was essential in the maintenance of the image of policing as a masculine occupation. The regulation of the sexuality of

¹⁹⁰ A/Commr. Dave Cleveland, “National Broadcast,” 23 September 1996. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08. The RCMP honoured its commitment; 32 percent of the cadets undergoing training in Regina in 1995-1996 were women. Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 34.

¹⁹¹ In the 1990s, for example, four female RCMP officers sued the RCMP after being sexually assaulted by Sgt. Robert Blundell in Calgary between 1994 and 1997. The RCMP reached a settlement with the women out of court and Blundell and the female police officers remained with the RCMP. See Joe Friesen and Andy Hoffman, “RCMP Reaches Settlement Over Sex-Assault Allegations,” *The Globe and Mail*, 4 August 2004.

Mounties, both male and female, conveyed to the public the RCMP's moral qualifications in policing the sexuality of Canadians. Accordingly, the sexual female police body occupies a prominent place in the force's history. From the perspective of official policy development, the RCMP was ill-prepared for the arrival of women, however. Policies regarding maternity leave, marriage, and the transfer of married couples, developed unevenly and slowly during these decades. In the absence of official regulations, the rights of women in the workplace were sometimes violated, especially when it came to transfers and promotions. With respect to maternity leave, decisions of commanding officers were informed by gendered understandings of working women. They were loath to address the issue of pregnant Mounties. Concerns over endangering a fetus, as well as an expectant mother, most likely factored into their inability to arrive at a consensus regarding an official maternity leave policy. Women were excluded from the decision-making process regarding maternity leave, and were denied a say about control of their own bodies. Consequently, the delays were a form of non-regulation that suggested women who worked outside the home were transgressing conventional standards of femininity and shirking their responsibilities as mothers.

Unofficially, police culture regulated the sexuality of female Mounties in a number of ways. Heterosexuality played a significant role in the masculine identity of men of the RCMP and was a central feature of the masculinist crime-fighter image of the police force. Indeed, heterosexuality was ritualized by the members of the Musical Ride through their lawnmower competitions. In an attempt to reinforce beliefs about women's inherent sexual orientation toward men, male police officers engaged in the spread of gossip and rumours that speculated about the sex lives of female Mounties. During a time when women working at male-dominated jobs were often characterized as lesbians in wider Canadian society, female Mounties were monitored for signs of appropriately heterosexual, feminine behaviour. When heterosexual women resisted sexual overtures from male Mounties, they were pejoratively labeled as dykes or lesbians. For lesbian Mounties, such constructions silenced their sexual orientation within the RCMP. Since their jobs depended on their appearing appropriately heterosexual, lesbians were further marginalized within the organization, especially if their sexual orientation was discovered.

Female police officers continued to be thought of in dichotomous terms, as either equal or different. Because few male police officers could conceive that it was possible

for women to be both, their biological difference continued to be the focus of those who were opposed to female Mounties. Consequently, the female police body emerged as a site of tension between the men and women who struggled to come to terms with shifting understandings of gender in policing. Sexual harassment was seen as one way of maintaining male power within the occupation and served to remind women of their subordinate status as police officers. As a result, social control and power over female police officers, rather than sexual desire, was at the heart of most of the strategies many harassers engaged in. The interviews demonstrate that NCOs in particular used their rank and position of authority to harass, intimidate, and marginalize the women in the force. Although junior male Mounties were aware that women were being harassed, few were willing to intervene directly. The power of NCOs silenced both the men and the women from the lower ranks, allowing them to continue their harassment unimpeded. While some NCOs and commanding officers supported female Mounties and attempted to stop harassing behaviour, as the interview material also demonstrates, many were nonetheless instrumental in forcing women to resign.

Not all female Mounties experienced sexual harassment and not all male Mounties sexually harassed their female colleagues. But the studies cited here and the oral history interviews show that the number of women who experienced sexual harassment in the RCMP was high. From this research, we can see how female Mounties were treated as sexual objects rather than figures of authority, allowing male police officers to maintain their privileged status as representatives of state authority. The fear of retaliation from male colleagues, and the fact that official complaints were not dealt with by commanding officers, forced many of the women to tolerate, rather than resist, crude jokes, sexually explicit comments, derogatory insults, and the display of pornography in squad rooms. Sexual advances, sexual touching, and sexual assault were highly personal and particularly shame-inducing forms of discrimination. Further complicating the issue for women was the retaliation they received from their male peers, who punished them socially for whining about harassment to higher-ranking officers. Unfortunately, silence and inaction on the part of female Mounties who utilized their own coping mechanisms reinforced the viewpoint that sexual harassment was a natural function of masculinist police culture that women were expected to passively accept. As a result, the image of the RCMP as a highly moral institution and its members

as ethical was maintained, and the widespread use of sexual harassment to control female Mounties and neutralize their power remained hidden.¹⁹²

As the RCMP's own studies of sexual harassment show, commanding officers refused to see it as a systemic process embedded in police culture. Instead, attrition rates among female Mounties in the 1970s and 80s were attributed to poor recruitment standards, marriage and motherhood, or the inability of women to meet the physical or emotional requirements of the work. But some of the women were not prepared to passively accept the harassment or keep it quiet, and they began to exercise their agency by filing formal complaints. Nonetheless, by discouraging women from taking action against a colleague or by limiting their access to official avenues of complaint, commanding officers turned a blind eye to the spread of sexual harassment, contributing to its systemic growth in the RCMP.

The oral histories revealed that many of the women who complained were simply transferred. While a transfer afforded those women relief, the harasser usually emerged unscathed only to harass the next female Mountie to arrive at the posting. When women like Shelly Evans refused to let that happen by turning down the offer of a transfer, they endured additional abuse from their harassers, sometimes for years afterwards. Women like Evans paid a high price for their agency. Later in life, some would be diagnosed with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) as a direct result of the treatment they received from their male colleagues. In many cases, however, female Mounties chose to resign after efforts to assert their rights in the workplace had failed.

Revelations in 1986 about the prevalence of sexual harassment in the RCMP caused an uproar in Canada, and the women of the RCMP once again found themselves in the public spotlight. But eight years earlier, another event had generated unprecedented levels of concern about the wisdom of allowing women into the RCMP at all. In 1978, questions surrounding the capabilities of women as police officers had enjoyed renewed vitality with the first shooting of a female Mountie in the line of duty. That year, doubts about women as legitimate figures of civic authority flourished within the RCMP and the Canadian media. The shooting reignited debates about women as

¹⁹² Jennifer M. Brown, "Aspects of Discriminatory Treatment of Women Police Officers Serving in Forces in England and Wales," *British Journal of Criminology* 38:2 (1998): 268.

the weaker sex by focusing not only on their perceived physical limitations as police officers, but also on what was thought to be their emotional limitations as well. It drew attention to their unsuitability for their failure to successfully engage in violence. Once again, female Mounties found themselves in the media spotlight and under the intense scrutiny of their male counterparts.

Chapter 5.

Danger, Fear, and the Female Police Body

I hesitated to shoot Archer because I'm human, not because I'm a woman. But for the longest time, I couldn't shake the feeling that I kind of let my gender down.

Candace Smith

Female Mounties, as we have seen, were conscious of the opposition to their presence in Canada's iconic police force. The issue of group blame was frequently in play as those who were opposed to women as police officers often seized on the shortcomings and mistakes of individual women to critique female Mounties as a group. Specific characteristics such as physical prowess were viewed as essential requirements for the job. But the idealized image of the RCMP not only celebrated physical prowess, but emotional control in the face of danger as well.¹ Displays of emotion signified unprofessionalism in police culture and contested the masculine characteristics and values that male police officers embraced. Since the female police body was constructed as different from the masculine ideal, the alternative approaches that women brought to police work continued to be minimized or dismissed by their male counterparts. Specific characteristics that were coded masculine persisted as requirements that women were unable to meet.²

A comprehensive study of the psychological and emotional responses to stressors experienced by police officers can be complex. From a historical perspective, analyses of emotions have remained on the periphery of the discipline for more than a century, the central problems being how to define what emotions are and how to study

¹ Martin, "Police Force or Police Service?," 116.

² Kurtz, "Controlled Burn," 220; Bannerman, *Female Police Officers*, 172.

them productively.³ But studies of emotions have a place in historical analysis because, as Joanna Bourke argues, emotions are both a “sensual reaction to external stimuli, as well as an emotional involvement with the world.” More importantly, emotions are expressions of power relations, and words such as “fear” and “danger” are used in “power-political ways.”⁴ This was particularly true in the RCMP, where the expression or repression of emotions was intimately connected to understandings of gender and the relations of power that informed them.

This chapter opens with an exploration of how gendered ideas of emotion challenged power relationships between male and female police officers in the RCMP.⁵ It argues that dangerous and life-threatening circumstances illustrate how emotional control functioned as an important signifier of masculinity that supported the heroic image of the police force. The masculinist construction of police work conveyed policing as a battle involving not only physical strength but also courage in the face of danger. The maintenance of the Mounties’ crime fighting image relied on stoicism as a prime indicator of police professionalism. Accordingly, women working as Mounties, and their perceived inherent emotional weakness threatened to disrupt the symbolism associated with emotional control.

This discussion is further developed through a case study in the second half of the chapter. It captures how emotional responses to the murder and the attempted murder of four RCMP officers in 1978, including the first female RCMP officer to be shot in the line of duty, played out in terms of masculinist police culture and the women working to integrate into that culture. Debates surrounding the responses of female Mounties to fear and physical danger were not only a reflection of anxiety about the perceived feminization of the RCMP, but also served to remind women of their subordinate status to the heroic male Mountie figure. However, this example also illustrates the tendency in policing to separate the body from the emotions, as if they

³ Joanna Bourke, “Fear and Anxiety: Writing About Emotion in Modern History,” *History Workshop Journal* 55 (2003): 112-13.

⁴ Bourke, “Fear and Anxiety,” 113.

⁵ I am indebted to Elise Chenier for initially suggesting that affect studies had a place in my research. I am also grateful to Nicholas Kenny of Simon Fraser University for sharing sources on affect studies with me and for his helpful, and inspiring, discussion on the place of emotions in historical analysis.

inhabited some sort of separate sphere of existence. The case study will show that the emotional and the physiological are intrinsically linked and constantly informing each other, not only during dangerous and life-threatening encounters, but long after the traumatic events have occurred.

Gender and Emotions

In western societies in general, people have been encouraged and trained to control or suppress their emotions and to discourage others from emotional displays in public. Western philosophical thought has long contrasted rationality and objectivity with irrationality and subjectivity in gendered ways. Emotions were viewed as impediments to the acquisition of knowledge, and reason as the indispensable faculty necessary for human advancement.⁶ Nineteenth-century discourses expressly associated women with emotionality, in contrast to the rationality of men, which was seen as elemental to the politics and economics advanced by the dominant class in Canadian society.⁷ Following two world wars, a more modern masculine ideal was embraced, one that associated emotional self-control and reasoning power with technology and scientific progress. As a result, conventional codes of masculinity that emphasized the differences between men and women enjoyed renewed life.⁸ Manly virtues were idealized, and vulnerability, particularly emotional vulnerability, was denied and suppressed.

These paradigms continued to be embraced by many Canadians in the 1970s. In their *Final Report*, the commissioners of the RCSW cited a survey of Canadian men undertaken by the *Toronto Star* newspaper during the commission's cross-Canada hearings in which "More than half the replies . . . declared that woman's place is in the home."⁹ The idea that women lacked the emotional control necessary for a career, especially a conventionally masculine career, was a highly gendered political construct. Thinking emotionally implied subjectivity and impaired judgment.¹⁰ In fact, the only

⁶ Alison M. Jaggar, "Love and Knowledge: Emotion in Feminist Epistemology," *Gender, Body, Knowledge: Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing*, eds. Alison M. Jaggar and Susan R. Bordo (London: Rutgers University Press, 1989): 155.

⁷ Riley, "Am I That Name?," 103; Mark S. Micale, *Hysterical Men: The Hidden History of Male Nervous Illness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008), 280.

⁸ Micale, *Hysterical Men*, 280.

⁹ RCSW, *Final Report*, 12.

¹⁰ Anderson and Smith, "Emotional Geographies," 7.

socially acceptable circumstances under which men could express their emotions were events that gave rise to their anger, which was construed as an authoritative, rather than emotional, response.¹¹ The persistence of these constructs, reinforced through repetition over time, produced, according to Judith Butler, the norms that shape worlds and bodies.¹² As we will see, standards of normative emotional behaviour in police culture were both performative and political, since they situated female police officers as different from male police officers. Alternative responses to danger were stiffly resisted and perceived as the feminization of the occupation.

Emotional Detachment and Male Police Officers

The image of heroic police officers bravely facing danger and death was thought to accentuate the masculinity of a profession that left little room for the expression of emotions. The suppression of emotion was not only viewed by police officers as a manly response to danger, but reinforced the idea of the heroic police officer as professional, rational, self-sufficient, and impartial. Manly men did not overtly seek emotional release or need psychological help following traumatic events within this paradigm. Further, the suppression of emotions was viewed as one way to cope with the stresses of the job. The dangerous and unpredictable work that police officers encountered, coupled with constant decision-making that sometimes involved life-or-death situations, encouraged the implementation of informal coping methods such as alcohol and drug abuse and extra-marital affairs.¹³

It is worth noting that many of the early surveys consulted for this study did not explore or analyze the emotional aspects of police work. Instead, they concentrated on concerns over whether or not women would be able to meet the physical demands of the job. One exception was a 1987 psychological study commissioned by the RCMP. Psychologist Leslie Grauer found that “difficulties associated with hostility/aggression, career frustration, and marital/family problems were observed more frequently among

¹¹ Jagger, “Love and Knowledge,” 168, f.n. 17.

¹² Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, 9. Also Anderson and Smith, “Emotional Geographies,” 7.

¹³ Leslie Grauer, “Delphi Study Examining Psychological Issues for Women in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police: Technical Report” (January 1987): 18. Access to Information file GA-3951-3-03134/08.

Force members of both sexes relative to the general population.”¹⁴ In general, the failure to explore the emotional demands that the work placed on all police officers and their families from an emotional and psychological perspective was an indication of the degree to which emotionality was assumed to be an irrelevant issue within the occupation in the 1970s and 80s.

The failure to explore the pressures that the organizational structure of the RCMP placed on individual police officers had grievous results. Carolyn Harper recalled that there were a number of suicides committed by RCMP officers in the 1970s and 80s. There were three suicides in one year at one detachment in British Columbia alone. According to Harper, the RCMP refused to acknowledge that the leadership at the detachment at the time was a contributing factor and focused instead on the nature of police work as the cause. “The force took a long time to look at these situations and address them. When they finally did, they went overboard. They would let someone sit on sick leave for ten years and not address the situation, almost afraid to say that they needed to return to work after three years. Ignoring these situations affected morale.”¹⁵ The RCMP was hesitant to admit that some of its officers experienced mental illness or emotional strain. It was also eager to absolve itself and its commanding officers of any responsibility as contributors to the stress that police officers experienced. This was reflected in their inability to effectively manage the mental health of Mounties suffering from stress.

Male and female police officers did experience emotional burnout, but they responded to it differently. In her 1991 study of job strain in policing, Leonor Johnson determined that female police officers were more likely to experience “internal burnout,” that is feelings of being “emotionally depleted by the job.” In contrast, male officers reported experiencing “external burnout,” described as feeling emotionally hardened by working with civilians whom they treated as impersonal objects.¹⁶ One of the root causes for the differences, according to Johnson, was attributed to policing styles. Female officers felt that they brought compassion to the job and an ability to relate to members

¹⁴ Grauer, “Delphi Study,” 17.

¹⁵ Carolyn Harper, interview with author, 28 June 2010.

¹⁶ Leonor Boulton Johnson, “Job Strain Among Police Officers: Gender Comparisons,” *Police Studies* 14:1 (Spring 1991): 13.

of the public verbally and psychologically. The aggressive and physical style of policing practiced by men, however, was found to contribute to their emotional hardening in their dealings with members of the public.¹⁷ Indeed, compassion was viewed as a feminine response and was therefore not highly valued within an occupation where pressure to conform to the policing style of the dominant group was intense.¹⁸

Beliefs about manliness and the suppression of emotions were evident during police funerals. Rather than an opportunity to provide an emotional release and express grief, the police funeral was a coping mechanism that served as a manly substitute for the venting of emotion. It was a highly choreographed public ritual in which police officers from across North America joined together to march stoically in formal dress uniform to the funeral service of a fellow police officer. The ritual reaffirmed police solidarity, camaraderie, and the idea of a universal police brotherhood. It also served as a bonding ritual that supported the masculine values of informal police culture, including the maintenance of emotional distance during times of stress. The spectacle also reminded the public of the willingness of police officers to sacrifice their bodies for the sake of their communities.

The police funeral was also a site of political protest, where police officers could dispassionately register their resistance to changes in government legislation. For example, in the 1960s, capital punishment was viewed by police organizations as a deterrent against the murder of police officers. When the government abolished the death penalty in 1976, police officers and their unions across the country protested.¹⁹ When RCMP constable Dennis Onofrey was murdered in Virden, Manitoba, two years later, he was the fourth Canadian police officer to be murdered in one month. The president of the Canadian Police Association at the time “blamed the increase in violence against the police on the recent abolition of the death penalty.”²⁰ In response to Onofrey’s murder, 90 percent of the Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, police force walked

¹⁷ Boulin Johnson, “Job Strain Among Police Officers,” 15.

¹⁸ Stephen M. Hennessy, *Thinking Cop Feeling Cop: A Study in Police Personalities* (Gainesville, Fla.: Center for Applications of Psychological Type, Inc., 1999), 65-66.

¹⁹ Marquis, *Policing Canada’s Century*, 344. Also see Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*, 120-21.

²⁰ Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 212.

off the job to march through town in protest against the abolition of capital punishment “and in memory of their fallen comrade.”²¹

Unlike the police officers from Prince Albert, however, RCMP officers were prohibited by the *RCMP Act* from criticizing the federal government regarding changes to the *Criminal Code*. Their large numbers at Onofrey’s funeral served as a form of political protest and a united front against the new legislation. The funeral in Winnipeg was attended by 800 people, including police and law enforcement officers from across Canada and the United States.²² The visual impact of numerous columns of RCMP bodies marching in their red serge uniforms alongside large contingents of police officers from across North America made a political statement about the vulnerability of the police body during the commission of a crime. Yet, the funeral required emotional control that situated police work as a manly endeavour and those that performed it as ideally masculine, despite the inherent dangers.

Fear, Danger, and Female Mounties

Within the occupation of policing in the 1970s, constructions of women as emotional beings placed additional demands on female police officers that men did not have to contend with. Male police officers insisted that women adopt masculine characteristics such as emotional control as a proof of their competency as police officers. This included the proper management of emotions and responses to traumatic situations that were more closely associated with masculinity. Police officers who revealed their feelings were perceived as weak and unable to withstand the pressures of police work. Jill Ryan was exposed to this gendered thinking as a young OPP officer. She remembered her rookie years as “emotionally taxing,” not because of “my gender but because of my youth and naïveté”:

It was difficult dealing with suicides, accidental deaths, sexual assaults, child abuse, etc. . . . I remember going to the home of a young man who

²¹ Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 212. Prince Albert was a strategic site for the protest since it was the political riding of Prime Minister John Diefenbaker.

²² Also present were the premier of Manitoba, Sterling Lyon, and federal attorney general Gerry Mercier. Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 224. The presence of politicians at high-profile police funerals, in addition to coverage by the media, was another reason why police officers considered the police funeral an effective form of political protest.

had been killed in a motor vehicle collision. It was late at night but his parents were still awake, waiting for him. As I walked up the sidewalk with my corporal, I received all the bereavement training I would get. He looked at me and said, "Don't you dare cry." And then we knocked on the door. My heart went out to this family but I felt I couldn't grieve with them. I had to remain strong, stoic and aloof; that's what was expected of the police professional.²³

Ryan's denial that she found the work emotionally taxing because she was young, and not because of her gender, suggests that female police officers often bought into the idea that they were emotional creatures and needed to reorient their feminine tendencies.

As the above incident indicates, although Ryan longed to comfort the family, she was not allowed to join them in their grief for the sake of appearing professional. Downplaying any gendered aspect of her response, even years later, was an indication that female police officers took the lessons of stoicism to heart. The demand that she maintain emotional distance did not leave space for an alternative approach to the situation. We can only speculate on how differently the outcome may have been for the family had Ryan (and her corporal) been allowed to express a small measure of compassion. Her story demonstrates the ways that women were struggling with the contradictions of working in a male-dominated occupation. They were required to suppress their years of socialization as women in order to adopt a new set of expectations that were equated with professionalism. Ultimately, Ryan had to learn to manage and negotiate emotional trauma according to codes of behaviour that were more commonly associated with masculinity.²⁴

Similarly, RCMP officer Pam Osborne learned never to cry in front of male police officers even before she was hired by the RCMP. Osborne discovered that it was unacceptable for female police officers to cry when she was volunteering as an RCMP ride-along. As a result, Osborne determined that "I never, ever wanted to give anybody opportunity to say, 'Oh, she's just another female member.' There was never any time off for me because I had period cramps. I refused to cry in front of an NCO. That was just too female." As a volunteer, Osborne witnessed first-hand the operation of group

²³ Jill Ryan, email communication to author, 27 May 2010.

²⁴ Martin, "Police Force or Police Service?," 123.

blame in the RCMP and discovered that emotionality was seen as a feminine, and therefore unacceptable, approach to policing. Accordingly, she worked to suppress her emotions in an effort to downplay her femininity.

But Osborne also recalled that all of the men who interviewed her before she was hired, who trained her, or who rode with her afterwards, told her “Don’t forget that you are female, don’t forget your feminine side. . . . You’re not here to be another man. You’re a girl, so don’t forget that you are.”²⁵ In a masculinist culture, the admonition that Osborne maintain her femininity illustrated the anxiety that some men had that women would become more masculine if they worked in a male-dominated profession. At the same time, these male Mounties expected that she adhere to masculine standards of rationality during traumatic situations. Clearly many men in the RCMP viewed female Mounties in dichotomous and often contradictory terms; they were also struggling to understand what shifting understandings of gender meant within the police force. Osborne failed to identify these contradictory approaches and, like Ryan, equated the suppression of emotions with professionalism and, more importantly, as a way to gain acceptance as a police officer from her male peers.

Gendered norms dictated that women adopt masculine traits of rationality and emotional detachment. While many male RCMP officers responded in a variety of ways to trauma, women were expected to adopt similar coping methods. According to Kanter, women working in male-dominated occupations were required to “inhibit self-expression and self-disclosure,” even though psychological professionals considered the “ability to self-disclose a requisite for psychological well-being.”²⁶ Nevertheless, “rather than supporting emotional communicative policing as a necessary tool in crime prevention” and promoting these traits as acceptable alternatives in police work, police departments persisted in devaluing and minimizing characteristics such as emotionality, which were viewed as feminine and therefore inferior responses to the execution of police duties.²⁷

Lorraine Gibson worked in a sex crimes unit for four years before she felt the need to ask for a transfer. Initially, she thought that the work would not disturb her – an

²⁵ Pam Osborne, interview with author, 8 October 2006.

²⁶ Kanter, “Some Effects of Proportions on Group Life,” *Men and Women of the Corporation*, f.n. 5, 988.

²⁷ Corsianos, *Policing and Gendered Justice*, 130.

attitude that changed after she had children. She recalled, “My oldest was getting a little older and, you know, when she was two and then you have victims that are two and you see the size of them and what they’re feeling, oh, it just made me nauseous. That’s the time I definitely needed the change.”²⁸ Men also struggled with the work in the sex crimes unit, especially when children were involved. Male police officers fought with their emotions but their responses usually took the form of anger. According to Gibson, “You know, they [male police officers] get a little too emotional. Like I said, I got emotional, once I had kids, with it. But I still felt I could do the job and get information from [suspects], not want to kill them like most of the guys wanted to do. It probably deals more with life experience than gender.”²⁹ While Gibson downplayed gender and substituted life experience as an explanation for her differing response to interviewing sexual offenders, the fact that she felt it necessary to clarify the difference during the interview suggests she was cognizant of the importance of adopting behaviours that were considered normative for a police officer. The anger expressed by male police officers was viewed as an appropriate response to offenders who committed violent acts against children. The sex crimes unit was one area of policing in which men openly expressed their emotions during investigations without losing face. Gibson’s account illustrates her acceptance of the idea that male police officers suppressed their emotions in more acceptable and controlled forms than did women.

The idea that women were overly emotional, coupled with concerns about group blame, dictated how women responded to dangerous circumstances and trauma. In November 1982, Donna Morse was on patrol in a small western city when she received a call to attend at a head-on motor vehicle collision. Morse, then a seven-year veteran of the RCMP, was first on the scene since her watch partner was attending a domestic disturbance call. She initially observed a truck on its side and an impaired driver sitting on the median who appeared to be unhurt. Some of the men who were present at the crash site called her over to another vehicle in a nearby ditch. As she approached the ditch, Morse recalled, “two guys came up to either side of me and they grabbed me. And they won’t let me go any further and they [said], ‘There’s nothing you can do.’ One guy identified himself as a doctor. Still, it wasn’t clicking in, and I kind of shook them off.” As

²⁸ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

²⁹ Lorraine Gibson, interview with author, 16 May 2008.

Morse approached the ditch, she realized that the almost unrecognizable vehicle lying there was a police cruiser and that her watch partner was inside, gravely injured. According to Morse, “The members [who later attended] said that I was so calm. I took control [of the entire accident scene]. Just calm. But it was hard.”³⁰ Morse’s emotional detachment at the scene and her ability to take control of events was a response that gave her credibility and reinforced her authority as a police officer.

Despite the horrific circumstances, neither Morse nor the police officers or civilian staff at the detachment received trauma counseling following the incident. Morse explained that at that time, no one talked about post-traumatic stress and the RCMP did not provide counseling for its officers following traumatic incidents. Morse’s composure following the near-death of her partner was short-lived. Three weeks later, while driving her police cruiser, Morse began to lose her eyesight and the control of her muscles. She pulled over to the side of the road and radioed in to the detachment for help. Morse recalled, “It was a beautiful Sunday morning and I didn’t want to radio in to the detachment to say that something’s wrong here with me. So, they assumed I only ran out of gas. And I didn’t want to [tell them what was wrong] because I knew how upset we all were because [my partner] was still in a coma and [we] didn’t know if he was gonna live or die.”³¹ Eventually, another police officer arrived and took her to the hospital. By this time, Morse had completely lost her eyesight. At the hospital, she was misdiagnosed with multiple sclerosis. She lost her driver’s license, and the RCMP placed her on a medical leave of absence. It was a number of weeks before her eyesight gradually returned and before she regained the use of her muscles. Morse returned to restricted active duty two months after the near-fatal accident of her partner, although she was not allowed to drive a vehicle for a period of time.

Morse’s example vividly illustrates how emotions are often enacted through bodies. Joanna Bourke argues that all emotions, including fear, have a physiology. According to Bourke, “If . . . there is no consistent visceral response to fear, the emotional body nevertheless rapidly gives forth a multitude of signs: the heart pounds faster or seems to freeze, breathing quickens or stops, blood pressure soars or falls,

³⁰ Donna Morse, interview with author, 20 April 2010. Also Reilly Schmidt, “Women on the Force,” 41.

³¹ Donna Morse, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

and, sometimes, adrenalin is poured into the blood stream.”³² Morse’s ability to repress her emotions at the scene of the horrific accident in which her partner was so grievously injured may have served to convey the dispassionate professionalism that police culture valued. However, she could not escape the eventual physiological signs of the fear and terror she had experienced. Both male and female police officers working at this detachment experienced trauma as a result of the car accident, a reminder that emotional responses to life-and-death circumstances overrode gender. Both men and women were subject to the emotional impact traumatic events imposed, despite socially constructed values in policing that assumed men were able to control their emotions more effectively than women. The following section will demonstrate how the suppression of emotion had serious consequences for the mental and physical well-being of police officers regardless of gender, a factor that the RCMP failed to realize or acknowledge in the 1970s and 80s.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Today, we understand Morse’s condition as PTSD. In 2003, PTSD was defined by the Surgeon General of the Canadian Forces as “an abnormality of brain functioning that arises after psychological trauma.”³³ It was a condition that was prevalent among returning veterans of World War I who were diagnosed at that time with “shell shock.” Following World War II, the condition was labeled “combat neurosis,” and after the Korean War, it was referred to as “combat fatigue.” Although the terms were different in each context, the Canadian medical community universally evoked gendered assumptions when they labeled sufferers as feminized men who were unwilling to face up to the responsibilities of war. Mark Humphries argues that between 1914 and 1939, doctors in Canada “constructed trauma as an individual failure to meet masculine ideals . . . creating a link between war trauma and underlying gender and social deviance” to determine who was deserving, or underserving, of state assistance.³⁴ It was a response to psychological trauma that harmed hundreds of war veterans whose symptoms went

³² Bourke, “Fear and Anxiety,” 122.

³³ Col. Scott Cameron quoted in “Occupational Stress Injuries: The Need for Understanding,” *Report of the Subcommittee on Veterans Affairs of the Standing Senate Committee on National Security Defense* (June 2003), 5.

³⁴ Mark Humphries, “War’s Long Shadow: Masculinity, Medicine, and the Gendered Politics of Trauma, 1914-1939,” *Canadian Historical Review* 91:3 (September 2010): 508.

undiagnosed. It was a diagnosis that also saved the federal government significant sums of money in disability and pension benefits to veterans otherwise entitled to state aid. But the widespread recognition of neurotic weakness in returning war veterans also undermined the image of a “strong, mature, self-possessed species” entitled to rule the country.³⁵

In the 1970s, following the Vietnam War, American military doctors began to notice war-related readjustment problems for some veterans who developed anxiety as the result of reliving “events outside the range of common experience” after they had returned home. These symptoms, or syndromes, usually “developed some time after the stress or trauma had ended,” usually about two months following their return to the United States.³⁶ Canadian war veterans and police officers, like their American counterparts, often resisted seeking medical help for psychological trauma for fear of being stigmatized as unmanly.³⁷ Psychological disabilities symbolized moral deviancy and were associated with weakness and femininity, characteristics deemed of little value on the battlefield or on the streets while enforcing the law.

This approach positioned masculinity as a socially powerful construct that subordinated and/or excluded women interested in pursuing a career in policing or the military.³⁸ The close connection between violence, law enforcement, and the RCMP’s highly masculinized image explains, in part, why the police force did not acknowledge the need for counseling for its members after traumatic incidents until late in the 1980s.³⁹ Instead, the RCMP preferred to rely on understandings of ideal masculinity as well as emotional and physical strength as sufficient coping mechanisms for its police officers. As the experience of Donna Morse illustrates, female Mounties were not immune to the

³⁵ Micale, *Hysterical Men*, 280.

³⁶ “Occupational Stress Injuries,” 6; 13. Also see Tim Cook, “The Great War of the Mind,” *Canada’s History* (June-July 2010): 20-26; Mark Reid, “The Long Road Home,” *Canada’s History* (June-July 2010): 28-31.

³⁷ “Occupational Stress Injuries,” 7.

³⁸ Dummitt, *The Manly Modern*, 33.

³⁹ Veterans Affairs Canada, which administers the RCMP’s disability pension plan, publishes statistics on the number of RCMP officers receiving benefits for PTSD. As of March 2010, the RCMP had 1,847 police officers on medical disability due to mental health conditions. Of those, seventy-eight percent were diagnosed with PTSD. Statistics are not broken down by gender. Veterans Affairs Canada, “RCMP Disability Pension Clients: Demographic Profile as of March 31, 2010,” Statistics Directorate, Finance Division: 11. Also see f.n. 76, below.

psychological effects of traumatic or dangerous situations any more than their male counterparts were. We have seen how many female police officers bought into the masculine ethos of police culture by adopting normative standards of emotional detachment and equating them with professionalism.

Of course, fear was a reality for both male and female police officers. Although danger was not constant during the course of a shift, the potential for it existed and the thought was always in the back of a police officer's mind. Male and female RCMP officers did not like to admit to being fearful. One study found that RCMP officers were more apprehensive than they were willing to confess to their colleagues.⁴⁰ It was an unspoken understanding amongst police officers that an outward show of fearlessness was part of the job. Louise Ferguson offered this perspective about male RCMP officers and fear:

I don't think there are too many guys out there that don't live and die on their reputation, whatever that is, and have to make sure that they're stepping up to the plate. I really believe in this organization that you're prepared to do that. And maybe because it is that there are so many life or death, there's so many times a guy will look around [to see if] he's got back-up. It doesn't matter if [the call] is the neighbour's dog [barking]. They're afraid. And you get in such situations of danger you become dependent on whoever the next person is. . . . What you can't countenance from anybody is turning your back and going in another direction.⁴¹

It was Ferguson's experience that male police officers did experience fear during times of danger, even if they did not like to admit it. Like their male counterparts, many of the female Mounties interviewed for this research did not like admit to being afraid, but they did share stories that involved being fearful of the outcome. Leslie Clark talked about one incident that caused her to be fearful:

I'm not scared of fighting in the general sense or in being physical . . . But you know, there'd be some situations. Like one time, we went up to this guy [who was] supposedly waiting for us with a shotgun. It was in an apartment building and it was in the basement, and there was only one way to get there and I just did not want to stand in front of that door. My partner did, and I'm going, "You're an idiot!" I don't think I said it quite like

⁴⁰ Stark, *The Role of Female Constables*, 89.

⁴¹ Louise Ferguson, interview with author, 9 November 2006.

that. I think I said, "You're safer up here." So, things like that, you sort of wonder.⁴²

Allison Palmer, who policed in rural areas in the prairies in the 1970s, recalled that she always rode alone except on Friday nights in the summer, when patrol officers would double up because of the number of complaints the detachment received. The rest of the year, Palmer rode alone and her backup, because of the size of the patrol area, was usually far away. The potential for danger while policing alone was always in the back of her mind:

I remember one night that we had to go out to a deserted farm. I hadn't been there [at the detachment] very long, maybe a week. And here we are, going through a pigsty on our belly. . . . As it turned out, there was nothing [to the call]. There were times that you wondered [about the danger]. You had to go to a complaint by yourself, and there'd be all these big dogs barking and stuff, [and] you had to get out of your car. You'd see somebody slumped over the table [and] you didn't know what you were walking in to. But it never stopped me from going and doing it.⁴³

Similarly, Janet Porter, one of the youngest members of Troop 17 at nineteen years old, recalled one frightening incident: "My partner and I, there was an alarm that went off in a warehouse. My partner went in first and we had our guns out. And I was covering him. And it turned out to be nothing, but it was scary."⁴⁴ At her first posting, Porter discovered that she did not like riding alone or stopping cars at night, a fear she was unable to overcome.

Carol Franklin remembered fearing that she had unintentionally killed a member of the public during a vehicle pursuit. In 1987, Franklin, a corporal at the time of the incident, gave chase to a speeding car with four young people inside late one night. After reaching speeds of 108 km an hour, Franklin decided to slow down and call off the pursuit, thinking it was getting too dangerous. She left the police car's siren on and the lights flashing while she kept the suspect vehicle in sight. At that point, she noticed the vehicle's brake lights come on in the distance. As she approached the vehicle, she realized that the car had run head-on into a telephone pole before stopping dangerously

⁴² Leslie Clark, interview with author, 9 October 2008.

⁴³ Allison Palmer, interview with author, 11 June 2008.

⁴⁴ Janet Porter, interview with author, 20 October 2008.

close to a deep ditch. At the same time, RCMP dispatch alerted Franklin that the car had been reported as stolen.

When she arrived at the scene, a young male exited the driver's side of the vehicle and Franklin drew her revolver, unsure of what exactly she was going to be facing. It was not long before she realized that the driver's "chin was down to here, he's broken his whole jaw. He just collapses" on the side of the road. As Franklin approached the vehicle she noticed two young people in the back seat in considerable pain. Then she saw the passenger in the front seat. His head was in the glove compartment of the vehicle. According to Franklin,

I just knew that, all of a sudden, all hell's gonna break loose because [of a young person dying]. When the [other] members got down there, I remember one of the members coming up to me and saying, "A guy in the passenger seat still's got his head impacted into the glove compartment." . . . And I'm thinking, "I've caused, somebody's gonna say I caused him to die." . . . He was young. I don't care whether that was a stolen car. And I thought I killed him. This member just said to me, "Carol, just calm down." Immediately [snaps her fingers] that was all I needed. . . . Well, he wasn't dead. He did end up with permanent brain damage.⁴⁵

For Franklin, the instruction from her male colleague to calm down was all she needed to act in a more professional manner. Losing emotional control at the scene was considered unacceptable behaviour for a police officer so she buried her emotions and regained her composure. Franklin remembered thinking, "I'm a woman. I don't want people to see me losing it. And I was so worried . . . you know, they could say that I was [in the wrong] even though I was at the point of calling this off. Of course, I'm following and I'm not doing anything wrong [but] I know how things can be changed."⁴⁶ Franklin was concerned that she might have caused the death of a young man and that her conduct as a police officer might have been called into question as a result of the pursuit. But, she also feared exhibiting emotions in front of her colleagues and other emergency personnel on the scene. Emotional management during traumatic events was a core value in policing for both male and female police officers, and expressing emotion was considered an unacceptable, feminine response to the situation. Since

⁴⁵ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

⁴⁶ Carol Franklin, interview with author, 20 April 2010.

word travelled fast in the RCMP about female police officers, Franklin was worried about group blame as a result of her emotional reaction at the scene.

The Shooting of Candace Smith: A Case Study

The ability of female Mounties to make split-second, life-and-death decisions with emotional detachment came under close scrutiny from their male counterparts. Male police officers often watched for evidence that would prove their conviction that women were too emotional to do police work. In 1978, when the first female RCMP officer was shot while on duty, discourses about the capabilities of female Mounties to perform masculine work enjoyed renewed vitality. Cst. Candace Smith was a rookie police officer, just six weeks out of training, when she was shot outside the Countryside Inn in Virden, Manitoba, in the early morning hours of 23 January 1978.⁴⁷ Herbert Bruce Archer and Dorothy Lillian Malette were driving a rental van that was overdue from a rental company in Vancouver, British Columbia. The van, parked outside room number 20 of the motel, was spotted by Cst. Dennis Onofrey after a routine license plate check of the vehicles parked in the parking lot. The check had revealed that the van was an overdue rental and that the occupants were wanted in connection with a series of crimes in the Vancouver area. Three police officers also on duty that morning were called to the Countryside Inn to assist with the police check: Cpl. Russell Hornseth, the NCO of the watch, and both members of Virden's highway patrol, Cst. John O'Ray and Cst. Candace Smith. Smith and O'Ray served as backup for Hornseth and Onofrey, who approached the door of room 20.

When Hornseth knocked on the door, the lights inside the room went on and then off. In response, Onofrey drew his revolver and pointed it at the door, which was eight feet away. Hornseth made several attempts to direct the room's occupants to open the door and step outside. Archer partially opened the door, his right arm concealed by the door frame. He observed that Onofrey had assumed the combat firing position and that his service revolver was drawn and pointed at Dorothy Malette, who was still inside the

⁴⁷ The shooting is also discussed in Bonnie Reilly Schmidt, "Contesting a Canadian Icon: Female Police Bodies and the Challenge to the Masculine Image of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in the 1970s," in *Contesting Bodies and Nation in Canadian History*, ed. Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicholas (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 368-85. I wish to thank participants at the Canadian Committee on Women's History conference in Vancouver 2010 for their comments, insights, and suggestions on emotions, oral history, and the Virden shootings.

room. Archer suddenly stepped forward and raised the 20-gauge shotgun he was holding in his right hand. Onofrey saw the gun but hesitated to shoot his revolver. Archer began to fire. The blast hit Onofrey directly in the chest, killing him instantly. Hornseth ran for the cover of a nearby police cruiser, shouting a warning to Smith and O'Ray, who also sought cover. Archer continued to fire, hitting Hornseth on the left side of his face and damaging his left eye. Hornseth took cover behind one of the police cruisers and began to return Archer's fire. O'Ray ran for the cover of a house adjacent to the motel's parking lot, and Smith took cover behind a ten-inch wide decorative abutment along the motel wall, just metres away from the door of room 20.

As Archer continued to fire, Hornseth, his eye bleeding profusely, and O'Ray managed to escape the gunfire on foot and meet on the frontage road just north of the motel. In 1978, members of the RCMP in Virden did not carry portable radios, and their only means of communication with each other or the detachment was via the radios in their cruisers. Given that all four officers were out of their police cruisers, Hornseth and O'Ray were without radio communication and unsure of the whereabouts or status of the other officers at the motel. Both were unaware that Onofrey was dead. And both believed Smith to be safe, although neither knew exactly where she was. Hornseth directed O'Ray to return to the motel and keep Archer pinned inside the room and under fire until he contacted the detachment for help. He then walked to the nearby hospital for treatment for his eye.

Without radio communication, Smith did not realize that she was alone and without backup. She remained pinned against the hotel wall. Although she could see Onofrey's feet near Archer's van from her crouched position, she did not realize that he was dead. The shooting finally stopped and things grew quiet. Smith peered around the abutment to see Archer standing in the doorway with his back to her, looking around. He was unaware that she was there. Smith shouted, "Drop it!" and pointed her gun at him and fired, missing Archer as he ducked back into the room. Archer, now aware of her presence, began to fire along the hotel wall in her direction. Smith was hit in the upper thigh and groin area, and the impact of the blast from Archer's shotgun knocked her to the ground. In pain but still conscious, Smith continued to point her service revolver at the door of room 20, firing twice more when Archer reappeared. Archer then fired a .308 rifle out the door; the shot ricocheted off a downspout and tore into Smith's thigh before entering her abdomen. When the shooting stopped, Archer left the safety of the hotel

room and checked Smith, who was losing consciousness, to see if she was dead. He took her service revolver from her hand. He then checked Onofrey's body, also removing the service revolver from his hand.

Archer and Malette fled the motel, escaping in Hornseth's police cruiser. O'Ray, who by this time had returned to the scene, fired at the fleeing couple. Malette was wounded in the ribs as a result of O'Ray's gunfire. O'Ray spotted Smith lying in front of the hotel. She was unresponsive when he called her name. He ran to his police cruiser to give chase to the fleeing Archer and Malette, informing the detachment of the shooting and the direction in which the escape vehicle was headed. As O'Ray drove by Archer's van in the parking lot, he noticed Onofrey lying on the motel sidewalk. He radioed to the detachment that two officers were down and needed an ambulance. O'Ray continued his pursuit, but the cruiser was damaged from the gunfire and had no headlights, a flat tire, and a punctured radiator. He gave up his chase and returned to the Countryside Inn. The entire shooting had taken ten minutes.⁴⁸

Archer and Malette travelled as far as Oak Lake, Manitoba, one hour away from Virden. Recognizing that Malette required medical attention, Archer embarked on a ninety-six hour hostage taking in which three people, including the town's doctor, Markus Scherz, were taken captive.⁴⁹ Learning that the doctor was unable to treat Malette without hospitalization, Archer released Malette for medical treatment following an agreement with RCMP hostage negotiators. She was taken to the hospital in Brandon. Archer eventually gave himself up after hearing that Malette was alive and would survive her injuries. The hostages were released uninjured after their five-day ordeal.

Back at the Countryside Inn, Smith regained consciousness and, in intense pain, began to drag herself along the sidewalk toward the safety of the motel's registration office. It was there that O'Ray found her. He put her in the back of his police cruiser and took her to the Virden hospital. Smith's injuries were life-threatening. She was transferred by ambulance to the hospital in Brandon, Manitoba, her wounds so serious

⁴⁸ Many of the facts of the Virden shooting related here were derived from the work of Robert Knuckle. See Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 144-55, and Knuckle, *In the Line of Duty*, 385-86.

⁴⁹ During the hostage taking, Archer demanded medical help for Dorothy, \$100,000.00, an aircraft, and safe passage for himself and Dorothy, whom he called his wife, to another country. "Oak Lake Gunman Demands \$100,000," *Winnipeg Free Press*, 23 January 1978.

that doctors were afraid to transport her to the larger trauma centre in Winnipeg for treatment. They feared that she would not survive the lengthy ambulance trip.⁵⁰ Smith underwent eight hours of surgery. She spent six weeks in intensive care and three months of recovery in the hospital. It took her three years to learn how to walk normally again and to recover her strength.⁵¹

Following her surgery, Smith was placed in the bed next to the recovering Dorothy Malette in the Brandon hospital, with only a curtain separating the two women. The medical staff at the small hospital was challenged by the task of treating two shooting victims at the same time and the decision to place Smith next to Malette was made in the interests of efficient medical care. It was a decision that, as troop mate Jane Hall recalled later, prolonged “the psychological siege which had begun [for Smith] days earlier. . . . [T]he medical community seemed to prefer to heal the body and ignore the mind.”⁵² In the 1970s, medical professionals also tended to separate the body from the emotions and failed to understand that the emotional and the physiological are intrinsically linked. It was a decision that was just the beginning of the emotional trauma that Smith endured for more than a decade following the shooting.

The RCMP and its police officers also played a pivotal role in her psychological stress. Trauma counseling, a standard procedure for all police departments today, was not available for the officers or staff at the Virden detachment following Onofrey’s murder in the 1970s. Smith recollected that receiving counseling was considered a sign of mental weakness: “[I]n those days, if you sought help from a psychologist, members wouldn’t even want to work with you.”⁵³ In addition to a lack of trauma counseling, Smith

⁵⁰ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 79.

⁵¹ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008; Canadian Press, “Injured RCMP Officer Leaves Hospital,” *Globe and Mail*, 28 April 1978.

⁵² Hall, *The Red Wall*, 79.

⁵³ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008. Members of the RCMP continue to resist the idea of psychological stress as a legitimate emotional response to trauma. In 2012, retired RCMP officer Brian Brown publicly recounted his struggle with PTSD while still a member of the police force. A thirty-two year veteran of the RCMP, Brown recalled the day in 2010 when “[s]omebody took it upon themselves to put a metal nut in my mailbox.” Brown commented, “It may seem benign, but it’s a clear message of how I was thought of by my peers.” Mike Le Couteur, “RCMP Needs Culture Change: Retired Mountie,” *Global National Evening News*, 16 March 2012. <http://www.globalnational.com/call+for+culture+change/6442602679/story.html> [accessed 17 March 2012].

was never interviewed by RCMP investigators about the crime or given a chance to make an official statement following her release from hospital. The only interview that the investigators conducted with Smith lasted for ten minutes and took place while she was in intensive care in the hospital in Brandon. According to Smith, "They took a two paragraph statement [from me] while I was drugged."⁵⁴ Smith was not debriefed, unlike the male officers involved in the shooting, because she was still in hospital at the time. Her hospitalization, however, does not explain why she was never debriefed following her release. In fact, Smith was not aware of many of the details of the shooting but "picked them up here and there from comments made by others and during the trial and outside of the court room. I never knew the whole story."⁵⁵ Smith was left to piece together the events for herself, a situation that ensured she would be unable to offer a competing discourse of the events at Virden.

Jane Hall, a troop mate and friend of Smith who visited her in the hospital in Brandon, recognized that Smith needed psychological counseling to help her cope with the trauma. Hall broached the subject of Smith's psychological well-being with the RCMP officer in charge of the investigation, who responded, "I spoke to her and I think she is handling it very well. She earned her spurs."⁵⁶ The commanding officer's dismissive attitude regarding Smith's emotional state reflected the masculinist attitudes about emotional suppression that dominated police culture. Seeking psychological help would have been considered a sign of weakness and raised questions about whether or not a police officer was mentally capable of performing police duties. Instead, the commanding officer likened being shot in the line of duty to a badge of honour, characterized by the metaphor of earning spurs, making Smith worthy of membership in the heroic police brotherhood.

Perhaps the officer was conscious of the potential for negative publicity. A police officer's struggle to cope emotionally following a high-profile crime would not enhance the RCMP's heroic image. Further, revealing the dangers that police officers at Virden faced because they were inadequately armed and equipped would doubtless result in public criticism. The RCMP was well aware that the outpouring of sympathy for Smith

⁵⁴ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁵⁵ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁵⁶ Hall, *The Red Wall*, 80.

and her male colleagues positioned them as heroes in the minds of the Canadian public. Whatever the motivations of the officer in charge, Smith did not seek psychological help on her own initiative or push the issue with the RCMP until years later. Smith loved police work and was determined to remain a member of the RCMP. She fully intended to return to active police duty, and was conscious of the stigma attached to RCMP officers who sought professional counseling for trauma suffered in the field.

The shooting at the Countryside Inn was the focus of intensive national and international media coverage. Journalists spoke with witnesses who described the gun battle “as if it was a war going on.”⁵⁷ Smith received considerable attention as the first female Mountie to be shot in the line of duty. Canadians were emotionally moved by the attempted murder of Smith, who received cards, poems, letters, and flowers from people across Canada. There were so many flowers that nurses distributed them throughout the hospital.⁵⁸ So widespread was the media coverage that prosecutors and defense lawyers had difficulty in selecting jurors for Archer’s trial. Seventy-three potential jurors were dismissed after admitting bias against the accused “on the basis of information they had heard or read on the case in the news media.”⁵⁹ Eventually, twelve jurors were selected and a date set for the trial.

The trial of Archer and Malette for the first-degree murder of Dennis Onofrey began on 14 November 1978. The media’s intense coverage of Smith’s testimony was shaped by a gendered discourse that portrayed her, and, by corollary, all female Mounties, as too emotional to shoot a suspect during the commission of a violent crime. Smith testified on 15 November, the second day of the trial. Journalists reported that she had testified that when Archer exited the motel room with his back to Smith, she had difficulty shooting him, even though she knew she would likely not have a second chance. The coverage of one journalist, Brian Cole of the *Winnipeg Free Press*, illustrates the gendered approach that male journalists took toward Smith as a female

⁵⁷ Brian Cole, “Virden Gun Battle Sounded Like War,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 16 November 1978.

⁵⁸ Knuckle, *Beyond Reason*, 261.

⁵⁹ Ted Allan, “Shortage of Jurors Delays Murder Trial,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 8 November 1978; Ted Allan, “Archer Trial Jury Selection Inches to Completion,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 9 November 1978; Brian Cole, “Testimony in Trial of Archers to Begin With Statements,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 13 November 1978.

police officer. Reporting in the early edition of the daily newspaper under the headline “I Knew I Had to Shoot, Policewoman Testifies,” he wrote:

An RCMP constable, who had had only six weeks’ field experience, testified Tuesday she had difficulty bringing herself to shoot at a man holding a shotgun during a gun battle last January at a Virden, Man., motel. With a quavering voice and appearing to fight back tears, Const. Candace Smith, 24, told a jury trial she had difficulty firing despite the knowledge that her life might depend on pulling the trigger.⁶⁰

The final edition of the newspaper featured a different headline: “‘I Couldn’t Pull Trigger’: Officer.” This edition reprinted Cole’s original story with a few amendments, mentioning that Smith appeared to be “fighting” with her emotions. Cole elaborated further on Smith’s testimony:

Appearing to be holding back tears, Smith testified she had a hard time getting up the courage to shoot the man with her gun. She said she finally yelled, “Drop it!” and then fired at the man, but missed him. She then testified she waited about 90 seconds, knowing all the while that if the man came out of the room again he might shoot her. Twice more she fired at somebody peeking out from inside the suite, she said.⁶¹

Cole omitted the fact that, by the time Smith had fired two additional shots at Archer she was severely wounded, lying on the ground, and in intense pain. He also failed to comment on Onofrey’s hesitation to shoot Archer after the suspect had initially opened the door of the motel room and begun firing.

Instead, Cole’s emphasis on Smith’s reluctance to shoot a man in the back implied that she was indecisive and unable to accurately assess the level of violence she was facing. As well, reports of her quavering voice and tears during her testimony conveyed to Canadians that women lacked the emotional control to function as police officers, especially in life-or-death situations. Since the media plays a key role in socializing women to accept their subordinate status by “constructing the female body as

⁶⁰ Brian Cole, “I Knew I Had to Shoot, Policewoman Testifies,” *Winnipeg Free Press*, 15 November 1978.

⁶¹ Brian Cole, “I Knew I Had to Shoot, Policewoman Testifies,” *Winnipeg Free Press Final*, 15 November 1978.

a site of risk,⁶² the focus on Smith's response during the shooting implied that she was a safety risk, evidenced by her wounded body and her tears. Reporters' gendered analysis of Smith's testimony reinforced concepts of women as overly emotional creatures, incapable of making the rational decisions necessary in police work.

Smith was surprised and angered by the media coverage and reports of her tearful testimony. According to her, she was "on the stand for several hours" but "teared up for five seconds" when lawyers specifically asked her about seeing Onofrey's feet on the ground behind Archer's van.⁶³ Rather than a sign of weakness, Smith's ability to tear up during questions about Onofrey's feet was a compassionate and moral response to the death of a fellow police officer. Today, studies on ethics and compassion describe the body's response to scenes of suffering, scenes that make moral demands of our bodies, "our hearts and our tears," as an ethical and humane response.⁶⁴ But back in the 1970s, Smith's emotions on the witness stand were evidence of emotional and mental weakness, rather than a sign of her grief for Onofrey, his family, and her fellow RCMP officers. Indeed, to understand suffering requires compassion and empathy, something that Smith was denied by journalists who portrayed her emotional response in terms of feminine weakness. Researchers today argue that scenes of vulnerability can also become an irritant for some, leading to a desire to withhold compassion by minimizing or misreading suffering in much the same way that Cole did.⁶⁵ By focusing on Smith's perceived lack of rationality and emotional control, journalists engaged in politics of power that positioned her as unequal to male police officers.

Following the trial, the RCMP capitalized on the public's interest in Candace Smith and the Virden tragedy. A public relations representative of the police force fielded

⁶² Marian Tulloch and John Tulloch, "Tales of Outrage and the Everyday: Fear of Crime and Bodies at Risk," *Discourse, the Body, and Identity*, eds. Justine Coupland and Richard Gwyn (New York: Palgrave, 2003): 107.

⁶³ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008. Archer and Malette were both found guilty of first degree murder and were sentenced to life in prison. Archer, a diabetic, died while still incarcerated as a result of gall bladder surgery in 1991. Malette, after sixteen years in prison, applied for parole and was released in 1993. Russell Hornseth lost his right eye. Denis Onofrey left behind a pregnant wife and two year old daughter. Knuckle, *In the Line of Duty*, 386-87.

⁶⁴ Lauren Berlant, "Introduction," *Compassion: The Culture and Politics of an Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 6.

⁶⁵ Berlant, "Introduction," 9-10.

numerous requests to interview Smith and forwarded her contact information to several journalists. Although it was difficult to relive the experience over and over again, Smith thought it was part of her job as a member of the RCMP to grant media interviews. As a young and inexperienced police officer, Smith was too naïve to realize that she had the freedom to turn down the media's requests. She recalled that a journalist from *Reader's Digest* conducted a telephone interview with her but decided against publishing the story: "They wanted a Cinderella story, a happy ending story, but I don't have a happy ending story." Two students writing a Master's thesis also interviewed her but "there was nothing of what I talked about in the [final] text. You want at least some sign that they heard." Smith began to feel used. Eventually, she contacted the RCMP public relations person and asked that potential interviewers be screened before her contact information was released.⁶⁶

Smith returned to active police duty at a rural posting in Manitoba after receiving medical clearance. Undertaking patrol work was something that Smith was proud of after months of pain and physical therapy. For Smith, "It was important to me to go and prove myself again. That took guts." To illustrate her struggle, Smith explained that when she approached the first few cars that she had pulled over on her return to duty after the shooting: "I literally saw a shotgun coming out of those windows. I knew it wasn't there, but I still saw it and you still have to walk up to that car and say, 'Can I see your license please?'"⁶⁷ Despite her fears, she never doubted that she could return to police work and be an effective police officer. In another four years, however, the effects of her undiagnosed PTSD set in and working in the field became impossible.

Rumours circulated in the RCMP that Smith had worked at a desk job rather than on active duty following the shooting. It was disturbing for Smith, who was proud of her recovery and eventual return to active operational police duties. But rumours about her status on the job fed assumptions about work in the field as a masculine endeavour, in which only the physically and emotionally strong survived. Gossip that placed Smith and her damaged police body safely behind a desk was an indication of the privileged position that work in the field occupied within police culture. In contrast, desk work was

⁶⁶ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁶⁷ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

assumed to be a more feminine and supportive role, away from the streets where real men fought crime.

Many male members of the RCMP were critical of Smith, and their comments created a gendered discourse, similar to that employed by the media, that all women were incapable of police work. It was talk that began the day after the shooting as word about Virden spread throughout the RCMP. Nancy McKerry, a member of the only all-female troop in training at Depot at the time of the Virden shootings, recalled that an instructor announced to her troop in class the following morning, “Anyone in this troop who doesn’t feel they can shoot someone can leave now!”⁶⁸ This response illustrated how attitudes about women as inferior police officers were imparted to recruits as early as their time at the training academy. The academy was a place where the physical dangers that police officers faced were routinely emphasized and where recruits regularly heard war stories from instructors about work in the field.⁶⁹ The transmission of police culture to recruits through the telling of these stories created a way of seeing the world that lasted throughout their careers. In the minds of many male Mounties, Smith’s actions at Virden represented the dangerous feminization of the occupation, and they created an alternative version that shored up the masculine status quo. This was evident in this particular instructor’s failure to reference the fact the Onofrey had also hesitated to shoot Archer.

Smith was frustrated that no one approached her directly with their questions or comments: “Being both female and a rookie, as well as having made errors of judgment in the split seconds involved, I was indeed an easy target [for my critics]. Especially for those who already had negative opinions about women in the force.”⁷⁰ This became particularly clear during a training course she was taking in Brandon, Manitoba, following her return to duty. The first morning of the course, she was advised that instructors would be showing a slide presentation before class that had been developed by the RCMP about the Virden shootings. According to Smith, she had just half an hour to prepare herself for the presentation and the ensuing discussion with the forty to fifty male police officers who were also in attendance.

⁶⁸ McKerry quoted in Hall, *The Red Wall*, 80.

⁶⁹ Also in Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 43.

⁷⁰ Candace Smith, email communication to author, 3 March 2010.

The slide presentation was based on the RCMP's investigation of the murder. Smith's role in the shooting was based on the two-paragraph statement that she had given to the RCMP while drugged and in intensive care. The RCMP police officers who developed the presentation did not ask Smith for her input during its creation. Smith recalled:

I watched this, and they were saying things like, "This is where she took cover but she doesn't know why." I had a reason for everything I did that day. I may have regretted not doing something else, but I had a reason for doing it that way. They just went on and on. I don't know how many times they said, "She doesn't know why she did it." Like I was running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Didn't even have enough respect to talk to me and ask me before they created this thing. Just made it up, "She did this, she did that, I don't know why."⁷¹

Smith recounted her reaction to seeing the presentation and its depiction of her for the first time:

I sat there in disbelief that I was worth so little that I wasn't even worth talking to before they created this. And they were going across the country teaching this thing. . . . [O]bviously they were going to think women were assholes, because she ran around like a chicken with her head cut off, she didn't know why she did anything, like bullshit, I knew exactly what I was doing. I had a reason for everything I did that night. And then I got mad. I went back to the detachment and I was mad. They said, "She's emotional." . . . To not even talk to you about it, you not only get shot but then you've got to be just discounted. . . . I still get choked.⁷²

Smith's anger at seeing herself depicted in this way was further aggravated by her male colleagues back at the detachment who dismissed her anger by relying on conventional understandings of women as too emotional to deal with stressful events.

In contrast to the portrayal of her in the slide presentation, Smith's account of the shooting sheds light on her decisions while under fire:

Where I chose to take cover was closer than the alternative, which was much farther away. I decided to take the less attractive alternative because I knew I wouldn't make it across the open parking lot to be safer.

⁷¹ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁷² Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

I took cover behind a ten-inch wall that jutted out and I realized immediately that I was screwed. But you only have half a second to make a decision; you make that decision and then you're stuck with it.

When asked about her failure to stop Archer by shooting him in the back, Smith recalled:

I did pull the trigger. He had his back to me and I was going to shoot him in the back. I thought I should warn him first, maybe I shouldn't have, and I regret it. And as I began to shout [in warning], he dove for the hotel room he had been staying in. Everything was hyperactive and my first shot missed. I was nervous. The next two shots I had just pinned him inside the room. I was just keeping him pinned and waiting for backup to arrive. I guess that meant that I shouldn't have warned him, and that is my big hate for myself. The other reason I hesitated for that fraction of a second to warn him was because when he stepped out of that room, no one else shot at him. I was alone there and did not know it.⁷³

Smith's oral narrative provides a more accurate account of her decisions and illustrates how the slide presentation employed a gendered discourse to critique not only Smith, but all women in the RCMP. Her account also allows us to summarize the events of Virden in an alternative way to subsequent versions. Smith and her colleagues at the motel were taken by surprise. They were outgunned in terms of the firepower Archer wielded. They were pinned down and unable to see each other. The officers did not have radio communication with each other or the detachment. Smith held her ground and maintained sight of the door of room 20 during the exchange of gunfire. When the shooting stopped, she was unaware that Onofrey was dead or that Hornseth was seriously wounded. Smith, as a rookie police officer, was left alone at the scene. She was unaware that she was alone. Despite being struck by a shotgun blast that had knocked her to the ground, Smith held her position and kept her revolver trained on the door of room 20, firing twice more at Archer while he continued to fire at her. Smith single-handedly kept Archer and Malette pinned inside the hotel room while waiting for backup to arrive. It never came.

To be fair, Smith's actions at the Countryside Inn were not the only ones under scrutiny in the presentation. It was designed, after all, to teach other police officers how to make safe, sound, and split-second decisions under violent conditions. Smith

⁷³ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

remembered that Onofrey's choices were called into question, albeit more subtly, since he had lost his life. O'Ray was also judged for escaping the gunfire by running to nearby houses, although comments about his actions were also more indirect. Instructors subtly accused him of cowardice by saying, "Lucky for him that he misunderstood which corner of the hotel he was to take shelter behind."⁷⁴ Cowardice, or at least the perception of it, was not considered an appropriately masculine response when under fire and called into question O'Ray's masculinity. None of the actions of the officers present at Virden escaped analysis in the slide presentation. However, the subtle and indirect critique of her male colleagues during the shooting contrasted sharply with assessments of Smith's decisions, which were both direct and blunt. Viewers were never told that Smith's statement, on which her part in the presentation was based, was taken when she was under extreme physical duress and medicated. Instead, her supposed inability to answer clearly questions about the details of the shooting and the decisions she had made implied that she was too emotional to offer rational assessments about the crime. Observations about Smith's actions also implied that all women were incapable of handling violence and emotional strain, the group blame that all female Mounties dreaded. It was a subtext conveyed to all RCMP officers who viewed the training presentation as it travelled across Canada.

Why were male RCMP officers interested in subjecting Smith to further psychological trauma by showing a flawed presentation about her actions at the shooting? Why would they develop and show a training presentation without her input or knowledge? And why would they surprise her with it? The fact that the subject of the training course was, according to Smith, unrelated to the Virden murder suggests that someone decided in advance to take advantage of Smith's presence to see what her reaction would be to the slides and the ensuing discussion. Surprising Smith at the last minute, leaving her with little time to formulate any counter-narrative, the presentation effectively silenced her voice. Forcing her to view it may have been an attempt to shame her for her perceived failure to live up to the masculinist values of bravery and heroics embedded in RCMP culture. Given that codes of manliness in the RCMP in the 1970s required emotional distance, the creation of a technical and highly dispassionate presentation, and the public shaming of Smith, demonstrated a refusal by the men of the

⁷⁴ Candace Smith, email communication to author, 10 March 2010.

RCMP to engage emotionally with her and her co-survivors of Virden. This refusal meant that the fear every police officer had of not returning home after the end of a shift went unacknowledged. But there is little doubt that the training that every Mountie received at Depot and their adoption of the masculinist values of police culture contributed to their emotional detachment. Emotional distance ensured that appropriately masculine behaviour was legitimized as the only acceptable response to trauma in the field. Showing the presentation was an exclusionary tactic meant to ostracize her and to let her know that she was no longer welcome as a member of the RCMP.

The shooting took an emotional toll on Smith that continued for years. Smith struggled with guilt: “The guilt I felt was not so much, ‘Yes, I should have shot him’ but Dennis [Onofrey] was obviously down. I didn’t see his feet until a little later . . . but my guilt was for the people [Archer] took hostage afterwards because I didn’t shoot him. I did feel guilty about that.” Smith also struggled with having provoked group blame and felt that she had somehow let women in the RCMP down. However, “I knew that even if I had done it perfectly, they still would have found something to complain about that they would have done differently. You never hear about the male member who missed the first shot, only the girl, the woman.”⁷⁵ Smith began to experience symptoms of PTSD four years later, while she was still working in the field. As the above-noted studies of PTSD point out, the effects of the syndrome are often not evident until months or sometimes years afterward, and this was true in Smith’s case. Eventually, after years of sleeplessness, the strain became too much. Her symptoms temporarily subsided when Smith was transferred to headquarters in Ottawa to work at a desk job. Smith was next transferred to an administrative position in Vancouver at “E” Division headquarters. While posted there, Smith did not receive an annual performance evaluation for three years. Although she continued to ask her supervisors for an assessment, no one complied with her requests. The absence of a performance rating meant that she was achieving a score of zero percent, and it was unlikely that she would be promoted or transferred to other units without a performance evaluation. It was a situation that bothered Smith since she loved police work and wished to remain a police officer.

⁷⁵ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

The failure of supervisors to assess Smith's work performance is another example of how NCOs played a central role in mediating the ways that female Mounties were received by members of the police force. As we have seen, performance evaluations within the RCMP were extremely important to a police officer's career, and the refusal of Smith's supervisors to assess her performance was an indication that some members of the RCMP were working to force her to resign. This was confirmed by rumours Smith heard that they were trying to squeeze her out by transferring her back into the field after an eight-year absence. By this time in her career, both Smith and her supervisors knew that she would be unable psychologically to handle the emotional strain of returning to field work. Employing gossip to force an unwanted police officer out of the RCMP was an informal exclusionary tactic used to exert pressure on a police officer who was perceived as weak and unfit for operational duties. As we have seen, the RCMP was reluctant to acknowledge that its own police officers sometimes contributed to the PTSD symptoms that other police officers exhibited. More importantly, the RCMP refused to admit that any of its members, male or female, struggled with PTSD. It was not until years later that the police force began to offer treatment and disability pensions for PTSD and other mental health conditions to its police officers, serving or retired.⁷⁶ As a result, the RCMP preferred to place a police officer on prolonged sick leave rather than address the underlying problems within the organization. In the 1970s and 80s, the police force was eager to absolve itself of any responsibility as contributors to the stress that police officers experienced.

It was not until the early 1990s that Smith finally asked for a medical discharge. She had had enough of the rumours, uncertainty about her future position, and uncooperative supervisors. Smith finally received the trauma counseling that she should have had after Virden. A member of the DSRR program advocated on her behalf and recommended that she receive professional counseling at the expense of the federal government. Veterans Affairs, the federal department in charge of health benefits for RCMP officers, paid for her treatment with a psychologist. Smith was officially diagnosed

⁷⁶ As of 31 March 2013, there were 2,236 RCMP officers (serving and retired) receiving a disability pension for PTSD. The statistics are not broken down by gender. The reasons why police officers seek health services are not disclosed by the RCMP for privacy reasons. "Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder," <http://www.rcmp-grc.gc.ca/fam/ptsd-tspt-eng.htm> [accessed 24 June 2013].

with PTSD and received a medical discharge from the RCMP in 1994. She continued psychological counseling after leaving the police force. When asked how she would like to be remembered as an RCMP officer, Smith commented: “That I cared and I really did try to help people. That really was my heart’s desire. And I tried to treat people with respect. I do miss police work. I quite loved it. I hated the bureaucracy and the back stabbing . . . but I loved the job itself.”⁷⁷ It was a familiar refrain of female Mounties who participated in this research. Despite the level of harassment they received, their love of police work was reason enough to try to work around the gender conflicts that they faced.

Conclusion

During the 1970s and 1980s, there was little room for emotional responses to life-threatening situations in police culture. The responses of individual Mounties continued to be governed by ideas of physical strength, mental toughness, and emotional detachment, key masculine attributes meant to reinforce the iconic Mountie image. Yet, given the dangers inherent in police work, emotions, or rather their suppression, formed a significant part of the police experience. As Marianne Robson succinctly observed,

There’s no glory in policing. You deal with the sad, the mad, and the dead. And, you know, policing is not always fun. . . . I mean, there’s things that you will do that people shouldn’t have to do. But because you are a police officer and you take on that responsibility, um, the community expects you to take care of it. So, I mean, dealing with death. I never ever got used to that. . . . You just don’t ever get used to that.⁷⁸

The suppression of emotions manifested itself in the form of PTSD – a threat to the well-being of police officers regardless of their gender. But symptoms of traumatic stress were routinely ignored by the RCMP. Many male police officers of all ranks refused to accept that emotionality had a place in police culture in much the same way that they resisted alternatives to the use of physical force during violent confrontations.

⁷⁷ Candace Smith, interview with author, 19 April 2008.

⁷⁸ Marianne Robson, interview with author, 29 July 2008.

Redefinitions of codes of masculinity in policing were strenuously resisted and women found themselves under attack if they failed to conform to acceptable forms of masculine behaviour during or following trauma and violence. Since the few women employed by the police force were scattered across the country, they lacked the support of other female police officers. Their isolation meant that they were “socialized into doing things in typically male ways.”⁷⁹ Indeed, many women like Donna Morse adopted traditional approaches to danger and violence, demonstrating that female Mounties were not always able to renegotiate normative standards of policing but often conformed to them. Unlike men in the force, women were motivated by a fear of group blame and the potential for their actions to discredit all female police officers. Appearing rational and professional under pressure and during violence was important to many female Mounties, who viewed emotional distance as essential to maintaining their credibility as police officers. As a result, almost all of them adopted emotional suppression as an appropriate response to violence.

The issue of emotionality in the RCMP was undergirded by gendered power relations. Debates surrounding the emotional responses of female Mounties when exposed to physical danger or trauma served to remind women of their subordinate status to the heroic male Mountie figure. The shooting of Candace Smith was an opportunity for male RCMP officers to legitimize a hierarchy of gender within the police force. The RCMP’s slide presentation of the Virden shootings relied on beliefs about feminine weakness and attributed them to Smith, who was deemed to be irrational and emotional during the shooting and Archer’s trial. It was an assumption that situated masculinity as the ideal for a police force under the perceived threat of feminization. The media also played a role in perpetuating discourses about women in the RCMP as the weaker and more emotional sex. Journalists’ gendered depictions of women ensured that masculinity continued in its privileged and dominant position in broader Canadian society. This was noticeable in news reports about the trial, in which accounts of Smith’s quavering voice and tearful testimony was a text about femininity transmitted to all Canadians. It revealed that journalism, also a male-dominated profession, resisted the perceived encroachment of women into occupations conventionally defined as masculine in Canadian society.

⁷⁹ Linden and Minch, *Women in Policing*, 77.

The shooting of Smith also drew attention to gendered divisions in Canadian society. While the empathy and encouragement that Smith received from the Canadian public in 1978 may have been a gendered response to a woman in danger, the high profile of female Mounties in communities across the nation nevertheless challenged notions of police work as an exclusively male profession. The materiality of Smith's body, her life-threatening wounds, her physical rehabilitation, and her courage demonstrated that women possessed the emotional and physical endurance necessary to enforce the law effectively. As the first woman in the RCMP to be shot and to return to active police duty, Smith emerged as an active agent in the history of the police force. But her agency was limited by the psychological toll taken by the shooting and subsequent events. Since the emotional toll eventually ended Smith's career in the RCMP, we can only speculate about whether or not she would have persevered had she received the psychological help necessary to cope with the trauma and her ostracization. The fact that rumours were circulating within the RCMP about Smith's emotional weakness was evidence enough that women were perceived as a threat to the masculine ethos that underpinned police culture.

Finally, the women of the RCMP challenged dichotomous assumptions that emotionality was a typically feminine response to stress and trauma, and therefore a sign of weakness, while the suppression of emotions was a singularly masculine trait and thus a sign of strength. Gendered discourses that promoted emotional detachment as integral to the occupation dominated police culture and women were expected to adhere to normative masculine responses. The social and gendered construction of emotion in police culture obscured the fact that, in truth, there was very little difference between the way that men and women responded – emotionally or physiologically – to trauma or danger. This is evident in the mental health statistics about the incidence of PTSD among all RCMP officers, both male and female, discussed above. Nevertheless, emotional engagement was not valued but was routinely dismissed as a sign of weakness within RCMP culture. The oral histories reveal that many female RCMP officers, like their male colleagues, were willing to place themselves in dangerous and violent situations even when they were afraid. They stood their ground, took control of crime scenes, made arrests, shot at suspects and were shot at in return, and protected the public. The emotional and physical responses of female Mounties to dangerous and life-threatening situations positioned them as active agents in law enforcement and

equal to the task. But their adoption of the masculine values necessary for acceptance and credibility was often at the expense of their physical and emotional well-being.

Conclusion.

Maybe we should focus on the things that make us the same instead of different. Maybe, after 21 years, we should just let it rest.
Beverley Busson, *Pony Express*, 1995

Between 1974 and 1990, women in the RCMP continued to be thought of in dichotomous terms, as either equal or different. In the midst of discourses of equality and difference was the female police body, which was considered to be physically and emotionally weaker, and therefore inferior, to the male body. Questions concerning a woman's ability to effectively fight crime resulted, in part, from long-held beliefs that a large and physically imposing male body was necessary in enforcing the law. Since the nineteenth century, state authority had been connected to masculinity which was officially represented by the body of the white and virile male Mountie of Anglo-Canadian descent. It was an image the country's hegemonic group, men from the dominant class, were eager to cultivate and the male Mountie emerged as a prominent symbol of Canada on the international stage. In Canada throughout much of the twentieth century, the image was more than an iconic symbol associated with the history of the developing nation. The masculine police body was also a reminder of the potential use of physical force to ensure compliance from civilians. The RCMP was active in projecting these social meanings of policing to the public as a means of engendering respect for police authority. Within police culture, the ability to use physical force was also viewed as a sign of competency and manliness. Accordingly, the use of force emerged as a key method of social control that reinforced the values and power of the hegemonic group in Canadian society. The arrival of a female police body disrupted the masculine image of the RCMP by calling into question such formulations.

By the 1970s, this iconic image began to present problems for the RCMP. In an increasingly multicultural society, communities that were being policed by the RCMP desired a police force that was more representative of the population. As well, the Canadian women's movement began to question the continued dominance of men in

every facet of Canadian society. Feminists organized across the country to agitate for increased access to male-dominated occupations, especially in federal institutions. When the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada filed its final report in 1970, the commissioners singled out the RCMP by recommending that women be allowed to apply as members of the police force for the first time. How to modernize and appear progressive, while maintaining the dominance of the traditional masculine image of the RCMP, posed significant challenges for the police force's commanding officers, who remained opposed to any renegotiation of the RCMP's image. However, these developments followed a number of public scandals concerning the RCMP in the post-Cold War era and the RCMP was anxious to repair its tarnishing image. Changes to hiring policies were viewed as one way to distract the public from its ongoing image problems and restore the legitimacy of the RCMP as representative of state authority.

The police force's image problems had intensified during the 1960s and 70s when journalists exposed a number of RCMP illegal activities. The publication of details of RCMP dirty tricks led to the questioning of not only of Mounties' authority, but the heroic image of the police force. Historically, the RCMP had a complex relationship with the media, and the police force alternated between defending itself to journalists and using the press for its own purposes. But the police force and the press shared some commonalities. The Canadian media was also a male-dominated occupation and journalists frequently conveyed conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity, including the idea that women were subordinate members of society, to Canadians. While relations between journalists and the RCMP were often adversarial, the RCMP nevertheless recognized the importance of the media in cultivating a positive public image. As a result, the police force turned to the media in 1974 when it decided to inform Canadians of its decision to hire women. In a highly uncharacteristic move for the RCMP, members of the press also received unprecedented access to female recruits during their training at Depot. The high level of public interest in the first female Mounties positioned the decision to engage the media as one of the RCMP's most successful public relations initiatives since its inception.

Journalists had a vital interest in interrogating the arrival of women in the RCMP, and many used the opportunity to register their opposition to shifting understandings of gender in wider Canadian society. At the centre of the media's coverage was a fascination with the female body. Since bodily difference was equated with inequality

between men and women in the 1970s, it emerged as an important symbol in the renegotiation of women's standing in society. Biological difference was used to justify opposition to women in the RCMP, and political cartoonists in particular created a gendered discourse that sexualized the female police body to counter this disruption in understandings of gender. Concerns about women's engaging in manly work were communicated in articles about changes to Depot's dormitories, the kit and clothing being issued to the women, adjustments to the RCMP's training program, and detailed coverage of the physical changes of the bodies of the first female recruits. Anxieties over women's bodies were evident in a number of photographs of the women lifting weights, firing revolvers, engaging in self-defense manoeuvres, and jogging, activities that were traditionally considered to be masculine pursuits. These images fed fears that women who worked in male-dominated occupations were in danger of becoming masculine.

Journalists were not alone in their assumptions about the inferiority of the female police body. Many of Depot's instructors were unsure of how women would respond physically to one of the most rigorous law enforcement training programs in North America at the time. Adjustments were made to Depot's training program to reflect equivalency standards that took into consideration the female body. For many male Mounties, equivalency suggested that women were receiving preferential treatment since they were unable to meet the physical testing standards established for the male body. Accommodations that reflected equivalency rather than equality implied that women were incapable of meeting the challenges the occupation posed. Very few of the women's critics expected that female Mounties would bring alternative methods to policing that did not require brawn and physical force. Yet, the assumption that physical force was an absolute necessity for police work was so entrenched in police culture that even when women were able to meet policing objectives in the field through alternative methods, they continued to be criticized.

Following the arrival of the first troop of female Mounties, the RCMP focused its attention on placating a number of constituents resistant to women in the RCMP, including the public and the media. But, in the interests of ameliorating those constituents, efforts were made to construct female Mounties as feminine despite the fact they were doing the same work as male Mounties. While the first female recruits were busy meeting Depot's training objectives, the RCMP was occupied with designing a feminine version of the male uniform. Since the RCMP worried that female Mountie

bodies would appear too masculine in a uniform, a feminized version of the male uniform was designed. Skirts, purses, heeled shoes, and a pillbox hat were just some of the unworkable elements that reminded Canadians that although female Mounties were working in a male-dominated workplace, they were not in danger of losing their femininity. Some of the design choices the RCMP made, such as the clingy polyester blouse, resulted in drawing attention to, rather than away from, the female body. The process became a delicate balancing act between feminizing and de-feminizing a uniform for women.

For many of the women wearing the uniforms, however, these impractical elements were viewed as conveying unprofessionalism because they emphasized their difference from male police officers and conveyed ideas of women's subordination within the RCMP. At the same time, however, most of the women still wanted to appear feminine, suggesting that they too were struggling to come to terms with women's changing roles in society. While some celebrated their difference by accepting conventional gendered expectations regarding attire, others were interested in blurring the lines by asserting their equality with men. Nevertheless, the difference in uniforms was one way that the RCMP regulated female Mounties differently from their male counterparts. The fact that women would not be permitted to wear the same uniform as their male counterparts for another sixteen years was evidence of the RCMP's gendered approach to women in the police force. In the end, the iconic Review Order uniform remained a distinctly masculine, and iconic, representation of the nation.

By the time the first women prepared to graduate from Depot in 1975, few Canadians could conceive of female Mounties. The physical and virile male police body was the only legitimate figure of civic authority to most members of the public. Although women had been serving in some municipal police departments in a number of operational capacities for decades by this time, most Canadians were unused to seeing women in positions of authority as police officers. Of course, in communities where the RCMP was the sole police force, women as police officers were unknown. Many communities were proud to be chosen to receive the first female Mounties and the women quickly became objects of curiosity. But members of the public were also struggling with changing definitions of masculinity and femininity in Canadian society and many were unsure of how to approach a female police officer. Some people adopted a paternalistic approach to female Mounties, encouraging them for doing a good job or

assisting them in their duties. Others relied on conventional understandings of masculinity and femininity to manipulate, harass, and intimidate the women to escape arrest or evade capture. Still others resorted to physical violence, and many female Mounties had to employ the use of force to make arrests. By and large, however, in a society where policing was equated with masculinity, the presence of female police officers was an unknown variable that generated significant confusion over how to respond to female figures of authority.

Female Mounties also found that some male civilians did not want to risk being bested by a woman in a physical confrontation, suggesting that there was sufficient, if sometimes begrudging recognition of a woman's physical capabilities to cause even the most uncooperative male to think twice before engaging a female police officer in a fight. Many men suspected that female police officers held some type of martial arts training. The suspicion was based on the assumption that the only way women could gain entrance to the RCMP in the first place was to possess specialized skills that could compensate for their female bodies. Few realized that most of the women did not possess special martial arts skills apart from the arrest techniques they learned at Depot, which were the same as those taught to male RCMP officers. The suspicion was often enough, however, for the women to achieve the desired result: compliance in arrest situations. The women were also not averse to utilizing their femininity by appealing to a man's sense of gentlemanly behaviour toward a woman. They sometimes relied on the confusion surrounding shifting gender expectations in wider Canadian society and utilized it to their advantage. At other times, the presence of a female police officer often de-escalated violent confrontations, not only between members of the public, but also between male civilians and male Mounties. Given the opportunity, combative males often avoided a violent confrontation with a male Mountie by choosing to be arrested by a female RCMP officer instead.

All female Mounties relied on their ability to resolve conflict by negotiating their way out of difficult situations. In fact, this strategy was the major difference between the way that male and female police officers approached police work in the field. Rather than engaging in the use of physical force, women first and foremost relied on their communication skills to resolve potentially dangerous situations. Female RCMP officers readily acknowledged that their shorter stature and lighter weight necessitated the development of alternative methods of enforcing the law. For female Mounties, however,

these differences did not represent their inferiority or subordination. Women simply positioned physical violence differently in their repertoire of policing skills than did their male counterparts. Although they were prepared to use force, they preferred to talk their way through dangerous situations whenever possible. As a result, they were quick to dispense with the idea that physical force was a measure of competency in policing. It was a successful strategy that demolished persistent assumptions of women's frailty and dependency on men. Indeed, some of the narrators interviewed for this study managed to evade the use of physical force almost entirely throughout their careers, likely preventing serious injury to themselves as well as members of the public. These alternative methods were indicators of the ways in which female Mounties exercised their agency as police officers. By choosing preventative rather than punitive methods when enforcing the law, women added a new skillset to policing. It was a renegotiation of gender, rather than a reproduction of masculinity, that afforded the women the opportunity to define their roles as police officers on their own terms.

Unfortunately, not everyone within RCMP ranks was convinced that women had a place in the police force. There was significant resistance to the arrival of women from many of the wives of RCMP officers, who informally excluded female police officers and contributed to the tension that the young women experienced at their first detachments. Officially, the RCMP worked to reassure the wives, especially as Troop 17 prepared to begin work in the field in 1975. But official reassurances did little to convince many wives whose marriages were already experiencing significant challenges as a result of social isolation, poor pay, and multiple transfers. Many wives were against their husbands working with young female police officers during long shifts. They were also aware that female Mounties were able to relate to their husbands' work in ways that wives could not, further compounding fears of extramarital affairs.

But the strongest opposition to women in the RCMP came from non-commissioned officers (NCOs). This group of Mounties used their power to informally regulate the women and influence how the women were received in the field both by their peers and by commanding officers. Many NCOs regulated female Mounties through a number of harassing techniques in an effort to force them to transfer or resign. They used their rank and position of power to intimidate and marginalize the women, undermining their position as authority figures in the community. Not all NCOs were opposed to female Mounties and many supported the women and helped them advance

their careers; others took a paternalistic approach; still others actively attempted to stop harassing behaviour. Nevertheless, the interview material shows that as a group, NCOs were opposed to any renegotiation of the masculine standards of the RCMP. They feared the feminization of the police force and worked to ensure that masculinity remained the dominant force within the RCMP. Consequently, harassment emerged as normative behaviour within RCMP culture.

NCOs adhered to traditional paramilitary methods by which lower-ranking officers were trained not to question those in authority over them. It was this paramilitary power structure that allowed them to challenge the presence of women unimpeded, and it was a hierarchy that was dominated by an older generation of male Mounties. Junior female police officers, trained to respect their superior officers and obey their commands, were shocked and traumatized when harassment from their supervisors occurred and then persisted. Further complicating the harassment was the fact that few men or women from the lower ranks were willing to intervene when harassment or abuse occurred. The fear of retaliation from senior male officers who wrote the performance evaluations of junior police officers ensured the silence of many in the rank-and-file, who understood the power NCOs wielded. NCOs also modeled this harassing behaviour for junior male officers as an important form of regulating women. As a result, many women in the RCMP resigned during the decades under study, especially after appeals to commanding officers failed to resolve tensions.

NCOs were aided in their harassment strategies by a leadership who frequently turned a blind eye to complaints. Indeed, commanding officers sometimes colluded with NCOs to protect their own careers from accusations of a failure to command effectively. Complicit in the systemic discrimination that the women faced was the Division Staff Relations Representative (DSRR) system. Since the DSRR program was also run by NCOs, some representatives hesitated, or even refused, to register a harassment complaint against a peer. Those DSRR representatives who did try to assist a female Mountie with a complaint sometimes found that their hands were tied by a commanding officer who intervened. Frequently, the only alternatives for a female Mountie who was experiencing harassment in the 1970s and 80s was to resign or request a transfer. The RCMP also used the transfer system to ensure that any female Mountie who reported harassment would be labeled a complainer, a reputation that would follow her to her next posting. In this way, the organizational structure of the RCMP, despite official

employment equity policies, socially and institutionally protected harassers. It also disempowered female Mounties, who were often forced to choose between the two undesirable alternatives.

Power and control, and not sexual desire, were the prime motivations behind the sexual harassment of female Mounties. Sexual harassment was connected to ideas of heterosexuality and manliness, which were highly valued within RCMP culture – a natural extension of masculine behaviour that women should passively accept. As with other forms of harassment, NCOs engaged in sexual harassment because they held considerable power over lower-ranking members, and the fear of retaliation was reason enough for many police officers from the rank-and-file to remain silent about the practice. But men from the lower ranks also sexually harassed female Mounties, through the use of crude jokes, sexually explicit comments, derogatory insults, and the display of pornography in the workplace. Sexual assault, sexual advances, and sexual touching from men of all ranks also occurred. Commanding officers were complicit in perpetuating the problem through their failure to deal with women's complaints. Their response was to transfer the female Mountie, and not the harasser, who seldom experienced any consequences for his behaviour. Women were often punished by their peers for whining to higher-ranking officers about the sexual harassment they received. It was a no-win situation for female Mounties in the 1970s and 80s, many of whom were told that harassment was simply a part of working in a male-dominated occupation. These tactics effectively silenced female Mounties, who resorted to their own informal coping methods, some verbal and others physical, when dealing with men who sexually harassed them.

The operation of a code of silence regarding sexual harassment allowed the image of the RCMP as a highly moral and trustworthy institution to persevere. Silence not only facilitated the continuance of the practice within RCMP ranks, but was necessary if the heroic image of the RCMP was to be maintained. Many male RCMP officers were willing to engage in the practice because they viewed it as the most effective way to reinforce subordination of women in the force and discourage them from remaining. Sexual harassment neutralized their power and effectiveness as police officers and was the most effective means of forcing a woman's resignation, which is why, as the RCMP's own studies show, the number of female Mounties who experienced sexual harassment was so high. Commanding officers persisted in their refusal to see it as a systemic problem, offering other reasons, such as marriage and

motherhood, to explain the high attrition rates of women. Of course, not all female Mounties were sexually harassed and that not all male members sexually harassed their female colleagues. Nevertheless, the interview material confirms that many female Mounties were treated as sexual objects rather than professional colleagues, allowing male police officers to maintain their dominant position in the RCMP and their privileged status as representatives of state authority.

Central to the maintenance of the heroic image of the RCMP were a number of core values, such as the belief that it was unmanly to be fearful. Accordingly, emotions play a powerful role in understanding the function of gender within the RCMP, and they occupy a significant place in the history of the police force. In addition to physical prowess, emotional strength was considered a sign of ideal masculinity in police culture. Psychological strength was assumed to be a core characteristic of the Mountie hero and emotional detachment signified professionalism, impartiality, and rationality. Emotionality was dismissed as a sign of weakness, an approach that explains why the RCMP did not regularly provide psychological counseling for its members following traumatic events for decades. Bodies and emotions were intimately linked, however, something that gendered understandings of the period acknowledged in terms of femininity but denied in terms of masculinity. Female Mounties were expected to adopt emotional detachment as an appropriate response to fear and danger. Most of the female narrators worked hard to challenge the concept that they were subject to their emotions and incapable of rational responses when under pressure, and adopted the masculine standards male police officers expected of them.

The gendered construction of emotion in police culture obscured the fact that there was little difference in the way men and women responded to traumatic situations. Male Mounties were no more immune to the psychological effects of trauma than their female colleagues were, and fear was a reality for both male and female police officers. But most Mounties did not like to admit to being fearful since it called into question their adherence to emotional detachment as a normative response to police work. Most police officers understood that fear was part of the job, but in the 1970s and 80s it remained an unspoken facet of the work. A refusal to speak about possible death during the course of a shift afforded police officers some measure of control over their work environment, despite the fact that the potential for death was very real.


These factors help in understanding why the shootings that took place in Virden, Manitoba, in 1978 elicited such strong reactions from the men of the RCMP. The response of Candace Smith during the gun battle emerged as the central focus of arguments for those who were opposed to women as police officers. Despite the fact that male police officers were also injured or fatally wounded at Virden, it was the focus on Smith's actions that draw attention to the gendered divisions within the RCMP. Her failure to shoot Herbert Archer in the back when she had the chance was attributed to her gender and her emotional weakness. Smith's detractors did not consider the fact that she continued to engage Archer in a gun battle while alone at the scene and lying on the pavement gravely wounded. For many male Mounties, her wounds represented what every police officer feared to discuss: the potential for death during the course of duty. At the same time, however, her wounds also called into question police work as a distinctly masculine endeavour, since deadly violence against police officers was not gender specific. Smith's actions under fire, her wounded body, her rehabilitation, and her return to active duty transcended dichotomous understandings of biological difference that marked women as the weaker sex. But the gendered response to her shooting was proof that a culture of masculinity, and not the biological differences between men and women, was at the root of the difficulties most women faced as they attempted to integrate into the RCMP.

The oral history interviews that were conducted during the course of this research were invaluable in understanding the history of the women in the RCMP between 1974 and 1990. Official RCMP histories, and memoirs written by male Mounties, have largely supported the masculine and heroic image of the RCMP and ignored the contributions of women. In contrast to these texts, the memories of the narrators who were interviewed for this research illustrate that women were more than passive agents in the history of the police force. Their stories shed light on the variety of ways in which women exercised their agency as police officers, calling into question the idea of policing as distinctly masculine work. The oral histories also revealed that there was a darker side to working as a female police officer in the RCMP. Not all of the stories related here were happy ones and a sense of embattlement and challenge dominated the memories of the narrators, and, hence, the majority of the interview material.

Belief in the possibility to be both equal and different as police officers emerged time and again as the women attempted to make sense of their role as historical actors during the interview process. Although they often adopted the masculine values of police culture, their work as police officers was more than a reproduction of masculinity. The alternative approaches they brought to policing were part of a renegotiation of gender, not only within the RCMP, but in broader Canadian society. Their work as female police officers signified that it was possible for women to assert their independence and be liberated from the socially prescribed gender roles in operation in dominant Canadian society. Few of the female narrators who were interviewed specifically represented themselves as agents of change by working as RCMP officers, however. Instead, they preferred to remember their love of the work and the positive contributions they made to the people and communities they served. While they denied that they were making history, they undoubtedly were.

Appendix.

Confirmation letter for documents received under the *Access to Information Act*, Royal Canadian Mounted Police

 Royal Canadian Mounted Police / Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Security Classification / Designation
Classification / Désignation sécuritaire

COPY

2009-01-19

Your file / Votre référence

Ms. Bonnie A Schmidt
152 - 8737 212 Street
Langley, British Columbia
V1M 2C8

Our file / Notre référence
GA-3951-3-03134/08

Dear Ms. Schmidt:

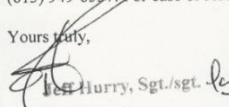
This is in response to your request under the Access to Information Act received on July 14, 2008, seeking copies of the files listed in your request.

Based on the information provided, a search for records was conducted in Ottawa, Ontario. Enclosed is a copy of all the information to which you are entitled. Please note that some of the information has been exempted under sections 13(1)(a), 16(2)(c) and 19(1) of the Access to Information Act. Copies of these exemption sections have been enclosed for your easy reference.

Please be advised that you are entitled to complain to the Information Commissioner concerning the processing of your request within sixty days of the receipt of this notice. In the event you decide to avail yourself of this right, your notice of complaint should be addressed to:

Office of the Information Commissioner of Canada
Place de Ville, Tower B
112 Kent Street, 22nd Floor
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 1H3

Should you wish to discuss your request, contact Cpl. Micheline Roberge by writing or at (613) 949-6537. For ease of reference, please quote the file number appearing on this letter.

Yours truly,

Yves Marineau, Supt.
Departmental Privacy and
Access to Information Coordinator

1200 Vanier Parkway
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0R2

attach.

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Oral Interviews and Correspondence from Narrators

Narrator names are pseudonyms with the exception of cases where names have become a matter of public record, (i.e.: recorded in autobiographical or historical material or identified in the media), or cases in which narrators have agreed to be identified. Those names appear in italics in the list below. The locations of the interviews have been omitted to protect the anonymity of the narrators.

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