

**RIDING AND REMEMBRANCE:
RE-EMPLACEMENT IN A CANADIAN FORCES VETERANS MOTORCYCLE
ORGANIZATION**

By © Karen Lynn Samuels

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Abstract

This thesis explores the social processes of post-release dis-emplacement experienced by a community of Canadian Forces veterans who rode motorcycles together. Across a range of military experiences and careers, including dangerous overseas deployments and other international and domestic postings, veterans experience a profound sense of loss and isolation following their military release. In this thesis, I approach the military as a place. I contend that retirement from their military careers is a dis-emplacing experience for veterans, which severs them from their prior sense of military emplacement. For this group and other veterans, retirement from the military means veterans' disconnection from familiar and empowering military lifeworlds, from a field of social relations that provide definitive narratives for self-identification, from predictable and regimented everyday activity, from a shared sense of purpose, and, from daily interaction with trusted individuals who were like family. I posit that veteran riding community members experienced grief as a result of the loss of their relationship with the military as a place. This thesis examines veterans' release bereavement as one of three social processes that make up post-release dis-emplacement. Veterans additionally experienced as dis-emplacing the intrusion of military skills and habits into their post-release lives in civilian public and work places. Lastly, veterans experienced as dis-emplacing their struggles for improved acknowledgement and compensation—from the Government of Canada and from civilian Canadians—in exchange for risking their lives, bodies, and minds in military service to Canada. I argue that veteran riding community members learned to mitigate the wounding and sometimes harmful conditions of post-release dis-emplacement through

their participation in a community of Canadian Forces veterans. As members of a community of Canadian Forces veterans, together, they rode motorcycles, raised money for other veterans and their families, and organized and took part in local remembrance events in attendance with civilians.

General Summary

Canadian Forces members exiting their military careers face numerous challenges as they transition into civilian society. These challenges include the experience of numerous losses. While veterans' losses sometimes include the loss of important relationships to death, they also include the loss of the military as a place that had formerly provided them with powerful senses of belonging, familiar routine, self-identification, and purpose, along with daily interaction with trusted individuals who were like family. I argue that a group of Canadian Forces veterans who ride motorcycles together, and other veterans, have experienced these losses as grief. I approach the period of time following their release from the military as a period of bereavement. This thesis examines the social processes of release bereavement in a community of Canadian Forces veterans and the ways in which community members have learned to confront the challenges associated with loss and isolation through their shared practices of motorcycle riding and remembrance.

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Dedication

For my father, Ernie Samuels, and for Tom Coder and Peggy Kelly.

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Chapter One: Introduction

“I need you to move when I move and lean when I lean. That’s all you have to do. It’s important that you don’t get on or off before I tell you to. Put your hands on my shoulders for balance and swing your leg over. You can hold on to my waist if you want. Don’t worry, you won’t fall off”. With visibly shaking arms and legs, I followed instructions and climbed onto the back of a motorcycle for the first time. That day, and most days after, I rode as a passenger with the road captain. He had been riding motorcycles for about 39 years at that point in time and part of the role he played in the riding group was to plan their weekend day trips. The road captain decided which routes the group would follow and maintained control over how the group moved in formation on the road. Safety came first for him, and the group respected his road captaining skills tremendously. This ride was a well-attended day trip on an early spring Saturday morning in 2013. Twelve men and women, with ten bikes between them, met at a Tim Horton’s near the airport that offered easy access out of the city. From Calgary, we were headed west towards the Alberta hamlet of Bragg Creek.

The morning of my first ride on a motorcycle followed my first session of the classroom section of a motorcycle-riding course in which I was enrolled. I had met the man running the course at a riding group meeting the previous winter. He had been invited by the president to talk to the group. The grandson of a Canadian Forces veteran, the instructor liked to offer group members, mostly veterans and their spouses, a deal on the bike course as his way of giving back to the veteran community. With group

members' encouragement, and along with two other members ready to learn how to ride, I signed up for the course.

In the classroom, instructors talked to us about protective gear, road safety and the mechanics of the machine. We also learned in vivid detail about how violently destructive a motorcycle crash can be for an unprotected or insufficiently protected human body. I went home panic-stricken and barely managed to carry myself to the meet-up place the following morning for my first group ride as a passenger. With a little teasing, and a lot of reassurance, group members convinced me that my first ride would not be my last. "Riding on the back of that Harley is like lounging on a couch". "Trust me, it's a really smooth ride". "You can't fall off. It's impossible". So I got on, we set off, and eventually I relaxed enough to find myself enjoying the motion, the wind, the Alberta landscape, and the company of my riding companions a lot more than I expected.

Members typically rode together in the same lane in a staggered formation—this created space cushions meant to allow adequate room for emergency maneuvers should group members encounter the unexpected on the road. Assuming a position in the left portion of the lane, the road captain rode in front. About a second behind him, the second rider rode in the right portion of the lane followed by the third rider in the left portion of the lane and so on, in staggered formation, to the last rider in the group (Government of Alberta 2011: 58-59).

Although the group had certainly endured a few (non-fatal) crashes over the years, I did not personally experience any during the riding season I spent as a passenger with the group. Except for one near miss that very first outing. As we were re-entering the city

on the return trip, an SUV very suddenly turned left in front of the road captain and me. By the time I understood that the road captain had skillfully avoided a potentially disastrous collision, he had brought the vehicle safely to a halt. There would later be more teasing about the bruises I left on him but in that moment, I was flooded with adrenaline and very raw fear. Almost simultaneously, that sense of ontological threat to my safety shifted into a powerful sense of security as group members emerged from behind us, protectively boxing us in and shielding us from traffic with their bikes and their bodies.

Thomas Csordas tells us that, "... cultural analysis" begins "in preobjective experience..." (Csordas 1994: 270). He is referring to lived moments before they are reflected upon, represented, or intellectualized. It is these feeling-full and somatic inter-subjective encounters between people, the environment, and things (like machines), he argues, that provide the grounding for culture and the production of selves (Csordas 1994). What follows seeks to examine this dynamic locus, this nexus capable of sometimes instantly, sometimes over years, transforming existential vulnerability into existential security. I never did learn how to ride a motorcycle; but riding as a passenger that day, and many days thereafter, I peripherally experienced an aspect of what I would later think about as powerfully emplacing processes of riding and remembrance.

1.1 Statement of the argument

During 2013 and 2014, I did fieldwork with members of a Canadian Forces veterans motorcycle riding community based in Calgary, AB. Among its members, conversations about military release were often conversations about loss: of structure, lifestyle, and kin; and in more complex instances, of trust and hope. The overarching argument of this thesis

can be stated in three parts. First, veterans experienced these losses of what Michael Jackson might call “what it means to be ‘at home in the world’” (2008: 23) as a form of grief that I am calling *release bereavement*. While death is a powerful cause of grief among human beings, it is not the only cause. People “suffer the loss of... prized possessions, beliefs and convictions, self-esteem, homeland and employment, with similar intensity” (Jackson 2008: 104). Moreover, the impacts of such losses, which are sometimes endured earlier in life, often persist for years or decades after they are suffered (Migliore and Dorazio-Migliore 2014).

The second part of my argument is that release bereavement is an emplacement problem. One’s sense of being at home in the world, notes Jackson, may be destroyed by “war, enforced migration, imposed social change, bereavement, debilitating illness, racist humiliation, unemployment or lack of recognition” (2008: xxii). In turn, previously developed capacities for “acting, building and speaking” may become invalidated, leading to a loss of confidence, satisfaction and enjoyment of life (2008: xxii). Veterans similarly found their skills, knowledge, and habitual modes of embodied participation and engagement with each other and their world, formerly functional in military spaces, to be out of tune in civilian spaces. Their sense of place, I argue, was unseated (Basso 1996). For Keith Basso, sense of place has more to do with participation in a community “than pure geography” (1996: 87). From this perspective, release bereavement might be experienced as the uprooting of “sentiments of inclusion, belonging, and connectedness to the past” grown in the shared “social and cultural soils” of veterans’ pre-release lives (1996: 85).

Finally, I argue that community members mitigated the problem of release bereavement induced dis-emplacement through participation in remembrance activities and riding motorcycles together. Motorcycle riding functionally engaged members' previously acquired skills while participation in shared acts of memory introduced them to new ones, generating processes of re-emplacement that played an important role in mitigating challenges related to transition into civilian society following military release. To provide some theoretical context for my conception of release bereavement and dis-emplacement, I turn now to discussion of relevant anthropological perspectives on phenomenology, embodiment, and place.

1.2 Perception and experience

A move towards phenomenology in anthropology surfaced in the early 1980s, according to Desjarlais and Throop, when some anthropologists began criticizing what they considered to be an overemphasis in the discipline on questions related to meaning, discourse, "structural relations, and political economy" (2011: 93; Ram 2015).

Proponents for a phenomenological turn in anthropology pointed instead towards "investigation of how humans perceive" (Ram and Houston 2015: 1) and an increasing focus on knowledge gained from everyday experience (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 93). Jackson, for example, insists that the study of "human consciousness in its lived immediacy" should be considered equally legitimate to secondary theoretical elaborations and the "conceptual systemizing" of experience. The reduction of experience to intellectual knowledge, he argues, not only obfuscates the lived contexts of contingency and struggle, it obscures cultural biases (Jackson 1996: 2, 43-46), "European, imperialist,

masculinist, white and so on” (Ram and Houston 2015: 2, 15). Because they contain dimensions of power, a focus on human perception and lived experience can help uncover the privileging of such intellectualized “forms of understanding” and thereby “work against... the social hierarchies that draw legitimacy from them” (Jackson 2015: 299; Ram and Houston 2015: 2).

From this perceptive, perception is always pre-intellectualized; it is where experience takes place. Phenomenology in anthropology does not require the dismissal of reflective analysis; rather, it proposes that by ceasing to assign such accounts “primacy over ordinary perception” anthropologists can learn more about the connections between specific cultural practices and how people perceive everyday life (Ram Houston 2015: 9; Downey 2005: 18). Paths to uncovering such connections may be accessed by bringing “to the foreground the importance of the background” (Dalidowicz 2015: 93).

The background consists of those invisible aspects of the social, historical, physical, and emotional environment that people do not usually pay conscious attention to but that interact to form understandings of familiarity and consistency that become enmeshed with senses of existential belonging (Dalidowicz 2015; Jackson 2005). Everyday practices—like wearing a uniform, eating with unit members in the mess hall, and sharing a work ethic—inform and organize people’s attitudes towards perceived experience and the ways in which they relate with the world (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 89; Dalidowicz 2015: 93).

Attention to people’s practical engagements with the world, oriented by their “desires and revulsions, proficiencies and uncertainties,” provide grounding for

understanding the kind of immediate experience that Jackson is concerned with (Downey 2015: 118). Such intentionality, argues Jackson, affects the ways in which people perceive everyday life and is best approached as:

... Dialectical tension between what is given and what we make of the given in the light of emergent projects, imperatives and contingencies. This is to say that what is possible for a person is always preconditioned by the world into which he or she is born and raised, but a person's life does more than conserve and perpetuate these pre-existing circumstances; it interprets them, negotiates and nuances them, re-imagines them, protests against them, and endures them in... complex yet subtle ways..." (Jackson 1996: 30).

Intentionality, then, is structured as well by the body itself (Downey 2015: 118). Skills and habits shape human perceptions of the world and are themselves informed by individual and social histories (Ram 2015: 36).

Implicit within the notion of intentionality is that moments of perception are experienced inter-subjectively (Jackson 1996). People's interactions with each other, the environment, and all the varied objects inhabiting their environments mutually constitute moments of perception that, for Jackson, distinguish conventional approaches to experience from phenomenological ones. Conventional structural approaches to experience, he argues, isolate immediate "sensible experience" for the establishment of "universal truths" and abstract individual agency in the process (Jackson 1996: 25, 29). Instead, Jackson suggests expanding the notion of experience to include moments of encounter, and the practical wisdom derived from and driving them (1996: 25). Building on Edmund Husserl (1996: 29), he refers to this inter-subjective field of experience and everyday goals as the lifeworld:

... That domain of everyday, immediate social existence and practical activity, with all its habituality, its crises, its vernacular and idiomatic character, its

biographical particularities, its decisive events and indecisive strategies, which theoretical knowledge addresses but does not determine, from which conceptual understanding arises but on which it does not primarily depend (Jackson 1996: 29-30).

The lifeworld must exist somewhere, a truism I attend to shortly in my discussion of place. The lifeworld—constituted as it is by perception, the sensorial, skill, and practice—is also deeply embodied.

1.3 Embodiment

Embodiment theory is concerned with bringing attention to the fundamental role played by the body in the constitution of perception and experience. It is considered one of the major contributions imported by anthropologists from phenomenological writings in philosophy (Ram and Houston 2015: 11-12; Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 89). Supporting everything human beings perceive and experience, the body is approached as an “existential null point,” the locus of all social and physical human engagement with the world (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 90). This perspective on the body enables it to be approached as a field of inter-subjectivity rather than as an object of scrutiny, examination, or measurement for symbolic, cognitive or aesthetic interpretation only (Desjarlais and Throop 2011: 89). As an inter-subjective condition rather than an object, embodiment makes room for agency and affect in its analysis (Csordas 1990; Geurts 2003: 372).

Csordas approaches embodiment as an anthropological method for distinguishing representation from being-in-the-world. It is a critical distinction, he argues, because it marks the difference between understanding culture as the kind of secondary elaboration of experience criticized by Jackson, and understanding culture as a field of lived

experience that is grounded in the human body (Csordas 1994: 10; Csordas 1990: 5).

Central to Csordas' conception of culture as embodied is "the collapse of dualities between mind and body, subject and object" (1990: 7).

Embodiment as described by Csordas situates cultural analysis along a continuum of experience from pre-objective (or pre-reflective) to objective (Throop 2005: 501; Csordas 1990). Demonstrating the difference between them requires the invocation of time. Before an individual can reflect on an elapsed lived moment, "consciousness is immersed in the felt flow of duration" (Throop 2005: 502). "On the level of perception," Csordas tells us, "we have no objects, we are simply in the world" (1990: 8-9). This is pre-objective experience; such perceptual pre-objective experience is never pre-cultural. Objective experience involves reflecting upon a moment once it is lived. So, as Csordas holds, the experience of perceiving ends in the constitution of objects, "a secondary product of reflective thinking" (1990: 8-9).

According to Csordas, perception plays a role in constituting culture, and, is itself constituted by culture (1990: 9). The processes of perception, he argues, are composed of background environments and intentionality (i.e.: practice) (Csordas 1990: 10; Dalidowicz 2015: 93). Approaching the body as the field in which culture operates (rather than as an object onto which culture is written) unites mind and body (affect, cognition, action) in the synthesis of cultural objects. A cultural object, from this perspective, is that which people know and learn through everyday experience both pre-objective and objective (Csordas 1990, 1994). Locating culture on a continuum of embodied lived

experience decenters the human mind as the “sole locus of subjectivity” and enables enquiry within the lifeworld (Jackson 1996: 31; Knibbe and Versteeg 2008).

Embodiment, with its attention to a continuum of perceptual experience, challenges theories of culture that rely on “intellectualist renderings” (Throop 2005: 501) of lived experience that approach as separate and distinct the cognitive and the affective (Guerts 2003: 372). As noted by Jackson:

This radical view of bodily subjectivity implies that meaning is not invariably given to activity by the conscious mind or in explicit verbal formulations. Meaning should not be reduced to that which can be thought or said, since meaning may exist simply in the doing and in what is manifestly accomplished by an action (Jackson 1996: 32).

Jackson, following Maurice Merleau-Ponty, refers to this kind of action and body based understanding of the world as practical knowledge. He posits that not all experienced reality is made up entirely of conceptual representations and that “gestures, acts and modes of comportment” do not always depend on prior conscious, reflective understanding (Jackson 1996: 34; Downey 2005: 19). Downey makes a similar point regarding the prioritizing of knowledge of the mind over knowledge of the body:

To treat all of culture under the banner of ‘meaning’ as if daily life became perceivable only because we constantly looked up definitions or recalled other experiences, flattens the lived world as though a film of representation lay between us and everything perceptible (2005: 19).

Unlike Downey, Jackson does not dismiss meaning from his understanding of practical knowledge; instead he reassigns it. “The meaning of practical knowledge” he argues, “lies in what is accomplished through it, not in what conceptual order may be said to underlie or precede it” (1996: 34).

One of the aims of embodiment, then, is to enable lived experience of the world to be approached with equal consideration as consciousness of the world. This approach lifts to equal footing the practical knowledge of the less powerful (Ram and Houston 2015, Knibbe and Versteeg 2008; Jackson 1996: 30-36). Having discussed three themes key to phenomenology in anthropology—inter-subjectivity, lived experience and embodiment—I turn now to a fourth (Jackson 2015: 293). Established above is the inherently embodied nature of lived experience; it is also necessary to address the fact that lived experience must always occur somewhere.

1.4 Place

From the perspective of phenomenology in anthropology, place is the immediate environment of the experiencing body (Casey 2001a: 683). It is generated in the interpenetration of human consciousness, memory, practical knowledge, and “the objective space of geography” (Ram and Houston 2015: 14). One of the benefits of this approach is that it dislodges visualism—conventionally privileged among the senses in ethnographic and “cultural-geographic” work on place (Feld 1996: 94)—and offers instead a multisensory conception (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2008: 5). Steven Feld and Keith Basso, drawing on Edward Casey, accordingly describe place as “... the most fundamental form of embodied experience—the site of a powerful fusion of self, space, and time” (1996: 9). My discussion also approaches place as embodied experience: inter-subjective, existential, in relation to memory, and in motion.

1.4.1 Encountering in place

As I noted earlier, the field of everyday lived experience and practical activity that is known as the lifeworld must exist somewhere in particular. That “no one lives in the world in general” (Geertz 1996: 262) is an essential trait of place, along with its inter-subjectivity and non-fixity (Casey 1996, 2001a). In this sub-section, I am concerned with relationships between people and places and how those relationships are made.

Basso and Feld use the concept of sense of place to describe ethnographic accounts of perception and experience in place: “the cultural processes and practices through which places are rendered meaningful...” and through which people create connections between themselves and particular landscapes (Feld and Basso 1996: 6-7, Basso 1996: 54). Essential to the formation of such connections is the mutual constitution of bodies, lifeworlds, and the places they inhabit (Persson 2007: 46). Bodies and places influence and integrate with each other (Casey 1996: 22). Basso describes this co-constitution of bodies and place as a process of inter-animation:

The experience of sensing places... is... both roundly reciprocal and incorrigibly dynamic. As places animate the ideas and feelings of persons who attend to them, these same ideas and feelings animate the places on which attention has been bestowed... (1996: 55).

This reciprocal motion renders places meaningful because people do valuable, practical, and meaningful work together in place. People’s relationships to places are generated in everyday occurrences, in action, and amongst others rather than in social isolation or in moments of reflection, meditation or solitary introspection (Basso 1996: 57). A sense of place, from Basso’s perspective, is a kind of inter-subjective experience but also represents an accrue of practical knowledge gathered over years of everyday

living in place, made available for transmission and access via the landscape (1996: 83). Sense of place roots people “in the social and cultural soils from which they have sprung up together,” effecting a shared sense of identity that is connected to a particular locality and made up of feelings of inclusion, belonging, and a collective sense of memory (1996: 85).

While places are particular, according to Basso, the experience of sensing place is universal (1996: 87). He writes about his experiences of sensing specific places located on the landscape of an Apache reservation in Arizona in the 1980s, but argues that what may be considered a place is best described from the perspective of those who occupy it (1996: 89). Moreover, and of particular relevance to the context of the Canadian Forces veterans riding community that will be the focus of this thesis, sensing place has more to do with participation in a community than “pure geography” (1996: 87). This point moves our conversation from the experience of sensing particular places to people’s sense of emplacement.

Casey argues that people’s relationship to places have ‘outgoing’ and ‘ingoin’ qualities. Outgoing qualities include those “highly differentiated and culturally freighted” characteristics of an individual that affect their “place-world”—one’s lifeworld as situated in a particular somewhere—from themselves outward: for example, ethnicity, gender or class (2001a: 687-688). Outgoing qualities of people’s relationships with places also include directionality, movement of one’s body in place; forwards, backward, leftwards, rightwards, up or down, etc.... Incoming qualities of people’s relationship with places have to do with how places affect people from the outside in. Bodies, argues Casey, “bear

traces of the places” they “have known” (2001a: 688). The outgoing and incoming qualities of people’s relationships to place are, of course, mutually constitutive; they feed back upon each other.

Casey identifies two clarifying aspects of the incoming qualities of people’s relationships to place: tenacity and subjection. Tenacity involves dimensions of time:

Places come into us lastingly; once having been in a particular place for any considerable time—or even briefly, if our experience there has been intense—we are forever marked by that place, which lingers in us indefinitely and in a thousand ways, many too subtle for us to name (2001a: 688).

The tenacity of place is especially relevant to the ways in which riding community members talk about what I am referring to as feeling either emplaced or dis-emplaced as a consequence of release bereavement (the subject of Chapter Five). Particular combat tour experiences, for example, in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, linger for many riding community members, as do their military careers in general for all members.

Subjection refers to identification with place. Veteran riding community members, for example, self-identified as soldiers long after their release, and they carried many of the (embodied) skills and habits they acquired in specific locations including bases and tours during their military career into their post-release lives. This occurred whether those skills and habits were in tune with their post-release lives or not. “In its subjection to place,” argues Casey, “a body reflects” (or expresses) the tenacity of place (Casey 2001a: 688).

Casey’s tenacity of place, along with its expression, recalls what Basso refers to as mature senses of place. Mature senses of place, he argues, can be very resistant to change (1996: 87); moreover, struggles related to loss of a mature sense of place can be

wounding and even traumatic (Feld and Basso 1996: 11; Casey 2001b: 717). This thesis will be concerned with the processes of such resistance to change—with mature senses of place unsettled, and then resettled differently. First, however, I want to address the connections between a mature sense of place, or a sense of tenacious emplacement, and ontological security.

1.4.2 Existentiality in place

Among the characteristics of place identified by Casey is the ability to gather various kinds of things—borders (shared notions surrounding inside-ness and outside-ness), the processes of everyday practical activity, memories, thoughts, and even languages—and hold them coherently in an “arena of engagement” (Casey 1996: 26). Precisely because places are so much more than pure geography, they are also capable of holding enduring familiarity for those who think about or remember them, whilst remaining changeable:

... A place, in its dynamism, does not age in a systematically changing way, that is, in accordance with a preestablished schedule of growth and decline; only its tenants and visitors, enactors and witnesses... age and grow old in this way. A place is generative and regenerative on its own schedule. From it experiences are born and to it human beings (and other organisms) return for empowerment... (1996: 26).

For Casey, then, the arena of common engagement that generates places themselves is always changing. However, as Basso maintains, people’s mature senses of emplacement are often less flexible. For example, upon release from the military veteran riding community members’ connections to military communities were strained, if not completely severed, making it almost impossible for veterans to return to those arenas of engagement for empowerment, yet, for many of them, a pre-release sense of place lingered—complicating their transition into civilian society.

Casey acknowledges ethnic, gender, and class differences in people's relationships with place as part of his discussion of its outgoing qualities. But his discussion of the characteristics of place (Casey 1996) does not leave a lot of room for power differentials and differential experiences of shared places. Certainly, every veteran member did not experience the riding community in the same way (as will be discussed in Chapter Four). Also gathered and held in place in the riding community's arena of engagement were differences in power, authority, and value attributed to gender and to particular military career paths (Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga 2003). The rest of my discussion of place and existentiality uses existential perspectives in anthropology to explore some of the qualities of familiarity (or what Casey calls empowerment) in place.

Anthony Giddens defines ontological security as "a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual" (1991: 243). He argues that an individual's trust in his or her primary caretakers, developed in early childhood, is linked to an early sense of ontological security that carries on into adulthood. Early ontological security consists of trusting that one's caregivers will return, even when they are not within the individual's perceptual range. It is also causally related to caregivers' establishment of daily, familiar routines. An ontologically secure childhood, notes Giddens, includes the child's ability to trust that every new day will be recognizably familiar compared to the previous one (1991: 38-39). It is worth noting that Giddens' description of early childhood ontological security is ideal, and that not all children experience such familiarity and routine in everyday life.

Beyond childhood, everyday practical activity among (more or less) trustworthy others enables a continued sense of ontological security because daily routine continues to provide answers to existential questions. These consist of “queries about basic dimensions of existence, in respect of human life as well as the material world” (1991: 242). Such queries, answered in the contexts of everyday life and struggle, recall what Jackson refers to as the existential imperatives of “love, mutual recognition, respect, dignity and wellbeing” (Jackson 2008: xxix). The capacity of everyday experiences to provide answers to questions such as, for example, ‘when am I,’ ‘where am I’ and ‘who am I,’ in relation to other people, has an anchoring quality (Giddens 1991: 37). It anchors people, things, and their shared environments inter-subjectively *in place* (Casey 1996). A sense of ontological security, then, is necessary to feeling emplaced.

Giddens is careful to emphasize that his intention is not to suggest that “dogged adherence to habit” is the path to feeling ontologically secure (1991: 40). Rather, he argues that when people feel ontologically secure, where their everyday living conditions generally provide them answers to the existential questions, they are well positioned for creative risk-taking. Such an “expectable environment,” Giddens maintains, helps carry individuals through risky situations and transitions without sustaining very serious harm (1991: 41); this is more possible, it seems to me, where one sufficiently trusts an arena of engagement to which they may also return for empowerment or comfort. Where individuals are cut off from empowering arenas of engagement and living under conditions that do not provide them with existential answers or the existential imperatives

(Jackson 2008), or who for example have been living in contexts of institutionalized regimentation, risk-taking and transition may prove wounding or traumatic.

Jackson describes experiencing a sense of existential risk as an irrevocable act of line-crossing that, “separates situations in which one feels relatively confident and in control, and situations in which one feels ignorant, out of place, lost for words and unable to cope” (2008: 23). It is a description that aptly captures the essence of many experiences of post-release transition conveyed to me by veteran riding community members: what I call dis-emplacement, the other side of feeling emplaced. Dis-emplacement is a topic I touch upon briefly later in this introduction, and in much greater detail in Chapter Five. First, I want to address three more aspects of ontological security or familiarity in place besides an expectable environment: hope in future possibility, acknowledgement, and sense of biographical continuity (Giddens 1991: 41; Jackson 2008).

According to Jackson, human being-in-the-world consists of constantly managing existential risk, of ceaselessly struggling to “sustain and augment our being” in relation to other people, the physical world and human mortality (Jackson 2008: xiv). Where sustaining and augmenting opportunities develop, where people may transform potential possible experience into realizable every day experience, Jackson calls the space of appearances. In the space of appearances, people take the “given potentialities” of their environment and make them into “the means to some kind of end worth living for” (Jackson 2008: vx). Such transition, or the transformation of potential futures into an experience-able present, involves risk:

It is not... primarily a risk of physical harm or breaking the law that keeps one from crossing the threshold from familiar to unfamiliar circumstances, but a dread

of losing one's basic ontological security, one's existential footing, and of finding oneself ill-equipped to deal with, or even comprehend, the new situation. This (is) loss of what it means to be 'at home in the world'... (Jackson 2008: 23).

The capacity to maintain hope in future possibility, then, is rooted in a sense of emplacement, of being able to feel sufficiently at home in the world (in one's immediate arena of engagement) to risk present conditions for potentially beneficial future ones; to withstand risky transition. Where a "family, community or nation" offers no space for the appearance of hope in future possibilities, Jackson maintains, people experience alienation and seek hope elsewhere (2008: xxv, xv). Alienation in this context signifies a rupture in the space of appearances—in the relationship between that which one is given by the environment to work with and making those conditions into "means to some kind of end worth living for" (2008: xv). Hope in future possibility is therefore another essential aspect of ontological security, and a deeply emplaced one. Also required of ontological security, beyond an expectable environment and hope in future possibility is mutual recognition (Jackson 2008). It is relevant here to address the relationship between recognition and emplacement.

Jackson situates recognition (or acknowledgement), and its loss, within a reciprocal logic of exchange. He ascribes two kinds of value to any exchange: determinable, measurable value and elusive, moral value. To what he calls 'existential' goods; including, "recognition, love, humanity, happiness, voice, power, presence, honour or dignity," Jackson attributes moral value (2008: 43). Unlike material goods with determinable value, the moral value of existential goods cannot be calculated.

Generally speaking, Jackson argues, reciprocity in an exchange is balanced or a failure in reciprocity occurs. Where failure of reciprocity occurs, existential goods have

not been fairly given, claimed or redistributed (2008: 43). Many veteran riding community members similarly offered examples of failure in reciprocity in their pre and post-release interactions with Calgary's civilian communities in particular and Canadian civilian communities in general. They described a sense of having never been sufficiently morally compensated, never having been properly acknowledged, for their military service.

In the riding community, reciprocity of acknowledgement operated between veteran riding community members and between veteran riding community members and civilians in the larger (Calgary) community. It is helpful to approach acknowledgement in the riding community from Jackson's perspective on signification. According to Jackson, the process of signification involves the transformation of lived experiences perceived by individuals as private into "forms that may be shared" (2008: xxvii).

The action of signifying... is less a matter of assigning determinate meanings as negotiating social meanings—comparing notes, sharing experiences, engaging in conversation, seeing things from various vantage points. While one's sense of an event may be inexpressible and personal, signification mediates connections with other points of view, other perspectives, other people.

Veteran riding community members talked to each other about the failures in reciprocity they experienced whereby members felt acknowledgement had not been fairly given, claimed or redistributed by civilians in exchange for their military contributions. By mutually acknowledging their experiences of failure of reciprocity, members helped generate an arena of engagement from which they derived empowerment and comfort (as will be discussed more in Chapters Seven and Eight). Drawing from this sense of emplacement, in an effort to restore balance to the exchange, some members then chose

to also share their experiences of failure in reciprocity with the larger civilian community at remembrance events.

Following Giddens and Jackson, an ontologically secure sense of emplacement requires an arena of engagement that offers an expectable environment, hope in future possibility, and acknowledgement. Practical activity in such a place helps answer the kinds of existential questions that people face in the daily struggle that is being-in-the-world. Drawing on Giddens' notion of biographical continuity, we can further approach an ontological sense of emplacement from the perspective of identification. Individuals with "a stable sense of self-identity," argues Giddens, are capable of communicating their biographical continuity to others and of keeping that narrative going because it remains consistent with their everyday practical experience (1991: 54). Here, everyday life matches and supports their sense of self-identification. Where answers to the existential questions 'who am I?', 'when am I?' and 'where am I?' do not match everyday experience, individuals may experience ontological insecurity and find it difficult to communicate their biographical narrative to others (Giddens 1991: 247).

Under conditions of ontological insecurity, argues Giddens,

... Time may be comprehended as a series of discrete moments, each of which severs prior experiences from subsequent ones in such a way that no continuous 'narrative' can be sustained (1991: 53).

In Chapter Eight, I discuss how participation in remembrance activities offered riding community veterans opportunities to transform their biographical narratives from discontinuous accounts into continuous and sustainable ones. Freshly retired community members found their skills, knowledge, and habitual modes of embodied participation

and engagement with each other and their world, formerly functional in military spaces, to be out of tune in civilian spaces. Immediately upon release they very suddenly became severed from their military communities while their sense of emplacement remained wrapped up in a community to which they no longer had access. The answers to the existential questions—who am I?, when am I?, and where am I—no longer matched their daily experiences (Giddens 1991: 247). Many retired military members told me that it was not until they joined the riding community that their narratives regained continuity. In Chapters Seven and Eight I will argue that there are connections between veterans' transition into narrative continuity and processes of mutual acknowledgement that are embedded in everyday participation in riding and remembrance activities that characterized membership in the riding community. My aim here is to suggest that ontological security requires not only an arena of engagement wherein an individual's biographical narrative is consistent with their everyday experiences but one in which they also experience mutual acknowledgement with other community members.

1.4.3 Remembering in place

Drawing on Casey, Basso and Feld describe place as embodied experience located at the fusion of self, space and time (Basso and Feld 1996: 9). Consideration of narrative description as one process capable of effecting such fusion in an arena of engagement is a useful way to address the connections between the processes of emplacement, subjectivity and memory from the perspective of phenomenological anthropology. Narrative plays a central role in phenomenological description, argues Jackson, because “unlike theoretical explanation, narrative redescription is a crucial and constitutive part of the ongoing

activity of the lifeworld” (1996: 39). People talk about past events to accomplish tasks in the present; and because past events, which retain present significance, always have occurred somewhere, one might consider their descriptions and re-descriptions to be expressions of tenacity and subjection of place (Fentress and Wickham 1992; Casey 2001a: 688). Chapter Eight focuses on some of the particular tasks riding community members have used narrative descriptions of the past to accomplish in the contexts of self-identification as veteran riding community members and the creation of change. In this section, I address theoretical perspectives on social, political, public and affective memory that are relevant to that conversation.

James Fentress and Chris Wickham link the conventional categorization of three ways of knowing: knowing propositionally (knowing about something), knowing somatically or experientially, and knowing skillfully (knowing how to do something), to the tendency in historical scholarship to distinguish between objective and subjective forms of memory (1992: 3-7). Because it has tended to be considered mental activity rather than physical activity involving feeling (knowing somatically or experientially) or doing (knowing skillfully), knowing propositionally is most easily objectified and has, over time, come to be treated as “something inside our heads” (1992: 3). Fentress and Wickham argue that this separation of propositional knowing (mental) from somatic, experiential and skillful knowing (physical) has made it possible to also separate people from that which they know. The authors connect this separation—of that which is known from the knower—to the establishment of so-called objective truth:

The crucial distinction here is that between knowledge and sensation. Knowledge may temporarily ‘belong’ to us; but it does not constitute a vital part of our being

ourselves in the way that sensation does. Knowledge can be added to and subtracted from us without our being changed in any physical way. Having a piece of knowledge in our head is thus very much like having it on a slip of paper in our pocket. Of course, the first bit of knowledge is mental, while the second is physical, and this difference is by no means negligible. Yet the point is that the analogy holds: having knowledge in our heads is, in its mental way, the same thing as having it in our pockets (1992: 3).

From this perspective, knowing something propositionally is independent of particular individuals. An individual might carry propositional information in his or her head but that information will likely also be available elsewhere—on a computer or in a book for example. Conversely, knowing something somatically, experientially or skillfully is dependent on the individual knower (1992: 4). Fentress and Wickham extend this perspective to remembering. Unlike remembering propositional information, remembering somatic and experiential information (and how to perform skills) has a personal element to it, even once having been shared with other people. The historic tendency of scholarship to divide memory into objective and subjective categories thus derives from a “doctrine of objective knowledge” according to which memory is conceived of as containers holding either objective information known propositionally or subjective information known somatically, experientially and skillfully (1992: 5). In Euro-North American society, since about the seventeenth century, argue Fentress and Wickham, information known and remembered propositionally has come to be considered more legitimate (1992: 8).

The authors seek to collapse this distinction between objective and subjective categories of memory by demonstrating that the distinction itself is false, confusing accuracy with ease of communication (1992: 7). While a piece of information might be

“objectively true,” they argue, its truth-ness or false-ness has nothing to do with the remembering of it. ‘Objective,’ propositional remembering is no more or less accurate than ‘subjective’ embodied remembering; it is simply that, generally speaking, it is easier for people to express propositional information with words than it is to articulate somatic, experiential, or other kinds of embodied information (like how to perform a skill) with words.

‘Objectively’ true is an attribute that can qualify only the information itself; it does not influence the way we know it. In terms of the experience of remembering, there is nothing to distinguish the remembering of true facts from the remembering of nonsense (1992: 6).

For Fentress and Wickham, then, the categorization of information remembered as objective or subjective is irrelevant to the process of remembering; moreover, the designation of information as more or less legitimate based on such categorization is meaningless. Instead, paying attention to the social encounters taking place in the contexts of remembering is what is relevant to analyzing the processes of memory. It is worth mentioning as well that, by collapsing objective/subjective opposition in the analysis of memory, we also collapse mind/body oppositions, enabling analysis of how memory is experienced in contexts of everyday practical activity.

Approaching narrative from a similar standpoint, “phenomenology,” Jackson tells us, “is less concerned with establishing what actually happened in the past than in exploring the past as a mode of present experience” (1996: 38). So the ways in which communities of people talk about past events can lend insight to members’ present space(s) of appearances, their relationship to the conditions of future possibility, and their desires for change (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 88; Roseman 1996: 851; Jackson 2008).

Unlike theorized memory reflected back by historians which distances the past from present experience, Jackson advocates attention to narrative description of the past; where remembering effects a connection between past and present (Jackson 2008: 39; Fentress and Wickham 1992: 24). In her discussion of road building in rural Galicia, Sharon Roseman illustrates not only the connections between talking about past events and effecting present change, but also between narratives of past events and processes of self-identification as agents of change:

Whether the "scripts" are public or private, constructed by members of the elite or by members of subordinated groups of people, stories about past events form part of a series of salient narratives that often comprise a coherent discourse on agency and the meaning of change. For this reason, the telling of historical narratives can specifically sustain present-day claims and activities (Roseman 1996: 851).

Roseman, like Fentress and Wickham, demonstrates the political deployment of social memory by the members of varying socio-economic classes.

In addition to enabling experiential analysis of memory through attention to narrative description in the present, analysis of the experience of remembering also functions as a guide to processes of social identification (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 24). For Fentress and Wickham, social memory is attached to membership in human communities (1992: ix). It is "an expression of collective experience" that "defines a group, giving it a sense of its past and defining its aspirations for the future". Also, social memory provides group members with the categories through which they perceive their surroundings along with the material with which to consciously reflect upon their surroundings (1992: 25). The structure of social memory is set by the conditions of everyday life and tends to reinforce group members' sense of identification in relation to

the world they live in. Fentress and Wickham identify two general patterns around which social memory tends to be structured in rural and working-class communities:

identification with geographic space (for example, the landscape, streets and squares, towns and cities) and identification as communities of resistance (for example, group members in conflict with outsiders, with employers, with the state) (1992: 113-119).

These are not mutually exclusive patterns, however, and memberships in groups may overlap.

Fentress and Wickham regard social remembering as playing a salient role in the constitution of processes of group identification (1992: 126). In contrast to the rural and working-class communities they examine, in which the membership has, over time, constructed and articulated its own social memory, Fentress and Wickham argue that at the level of the nation social memory is constructed and articulated by the economic and political elite. Moreover, processes of citizen identification through national memory are (re) structured to project the past in ways that support the economic and political institutions currently in power. Education and media institutions are likewise deployed in the articulation of national memory:

These discourses about the past are dominant, imposed on other classes from above, by public and private means: schooling, newspapers, books, and radio and TV programmes. They are linear in their conception of time and indeed teleological: very explicitly, all of them lead up to and legitimize the present situation. They are mythological charters for the whole national community, of course, and are intended to define that community; but this definition will include a legitimization of its structures of political and economic dominance, by which the elite justifies itself as an elite (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 134).

Memories alternative to national memories tend to be considered inaccurate or illegitimate according to Fentress and Wickham, as well as difficult to contest

successfully (1992:127). Such difficulty does not stop smaller communities from deploying social memory to disrupt national narratives, however. Chapter Eight of this thesis explores some of the ways in which veteran riding community members have deployed their memories to subvert Canadian remembrance narratives.

Whereas social memory scholars like Fentress and Wickham (1992) and Susannah Radstone and Katherine Hodgkin (2003) emphasize the relationship between remembering and processes of subjection and identification, Casey associates various kinds of arenas of engagement with not just social remembering but with what he identifies as collective and public remembering as well (2004). Since one of the key arguments I make in this thesis is that among veteran riding community members remembering in a variety of contexts had anchoring and emplacing qualities, it is relevant to briefly discuss Casey's "comparative phenomenology of memory" (2004: 20).

According to Casey, people who engage in social remembering already know each other. They might relate, for example, as family or friends, via geographic proximity, or through engagement in a common project (2004: 21). Those who share social memories also remain in immediate control of how their memories are used and interpreted, as well as who might become audience to them. Typically, social remembering occurs in narrative form and in real time—in person or via Internet or telephone. The precise location of this "co-reminiscing" is less important than that those engaged in it recall shared experiences that occurred in a particular place.

What matters is neither the exact technology nor the precise location but the fact (or its imminent possibility) of (a) having had the same history, at least via the proxy of another family member; (b) there having been a common place in which that history was enacted and experienced; and (c) being able to bring the history-

in-that-place into words or other suitable means of communication and expression... (2004: 22).

In comparison, collective remembering as described by Casey occurs neither in isolation nor in the company of other people but “severally” (2004: 23). It occurs when numbers of people who do not know each other—are not related through family, friendship, geographic proximity or common projects—and share no history, nevertheless remember the same event or events. Unlike social remembering, collective remembering does not have to occur in real time among people who know each other but rather occurs anywhere and at any time. What matters in contexts of collective remembering is “commonality of content” (2004: 23). Of emphasis in this context is shared focus rather than shared experience; such events were so unusual or so shocking that many people in many places remember where they were and what they were doing when those events occurred. Casey cites the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the September eleventh, 2001 events in New York City as examples.

Instead of possessing a taproot from which all memory stems as in the case of social remembering, collective recollection is not effected by members of existing clans, or regions, or projects in common (or if it is, this membership is irrelevant to the collectivity). The grouping is not based on prior identity or particular placement. It is formed spontaneously and involuntarily, and its entire *raison d’être* is a convergent focus on a given topic: typically an event but also a thought, a person, a nation. The members of this momentary collectivity are linked solely by the *cynosure* on which their attention falls (2004: 24).

Unlike social and collective remembering, public remembering occurs when people physically meet at a specific site of interaction; usually a public one like a town hall or a park. Moreover, the site itself draws out the remembering whilst sometimes embodying it as well: a war memorial for example, or as will be discussed in Chapter Eight, a field of crosses erected to commemorate fallen soldiers (2004: 32). Public

remembering is characterized by what Casey identifies as “public presence” and “public discussion” (2004: 33). Because public remembering requires a particular location, sites of public remembering temporarily gather people who might not otherwise find themselves in each other’s presence into communities congregated in common purpose. According to Casey, such public co-presence in remembering naturally lends itself to discussion.

He describes, as an example, his experience of public remembering at a vigil he attended in New York City the week following the events of September eleventh in 2001:

The atmosphere was mournful and sad but not morbid. There was a distinct sense of relief to find oneself in the presence of others—albeit strangers—with whom to share grief. But more than relief was at stake in this extraordinary circumstance: something constructive was in the air... there was a palpable sense of coming to terms with a trauma instead of letting oneself be crushed by it (2004: 28).

Of particular significance to Casey is the way people use language and movement in public remembering to attend to and communicate, largely through talking, difficult thoughts they might otherwise have kept to themselves:

What had become insufferable when experienced alone or with close friends and family called for a wider scene of discursive praxis. In that scene, filled with images and words, with gestures and walking and other bodily movements, not only could private grief be shared but it was made articulate in the presence of others: it was brought to public appearance, made present and real for all who participated (2004: 34-35).

For Casey, then, in the context of public remembering, place can effect a kind of anchoring for people’s traumatic memories; or, it can at least draw focused attention to them so that participants might experience the kind of mutual acknowledgement so important to feeling ontologically secure and, as I am arguing, emplaced.

I return now to Fentress and Wickham’s point that objective/subjective (or

cognitive/somatic) distinctions that legitimize propositional remembering over experiential and somatic remembering are false. Instead, they note, the relevant distinction is that remembering propositionally is easier for people to articulate with words than remembering somatically or experientially (1992: 7). Jill Bennett's perspective on sense memory complements Fentress and Wickham by demonstrating how a very specific kind of experiential and somatic knowing may be effectively communicated by conjuring affective experience through pre-reflective (pre-objectified) perceptual encounters with art (2003: 27). Specifically, she points to encounters with art created to trigger in audiences the "affective impact" of grief and trauma (2002: 334).

Bennett approaches sense memory from the perspective of both its experience and the communication of that experience. First, I will address the former. Because sense memory usually refers to the affective impact of grief and trauma, it is not really a process of remembering at all; rather, it is an experience of uncontrollable and often intrusive repetition (2003: 28). Sense memory refers to intense, extreme affective experience that is intangible; it is therefore both extremely difficult for experiencers to share, or benefit from relief in that sharing (Bennett 2002: 335). It is for this reason, argues Bennett, that mediation is required for such experiences to be communicated. Bennett examines the work of several artists who sought to convey the experience of the affect of traumatic repetition to their audiences by triggering in their audiences bodily encounters with their work. According to Bennett's theory of affect, through their encounter with art, audiences may be transformed into witnesses (2003: 28).

Every year in November veteran riding group members erect a memorial

installation in an otherwise empty field alongside a major artery in Northwest Calgary. This installation, known as The Field of Crosses, is made up of several thousand white crosses (and a few Stars of David) each representing Southern Alberta Canadian Forces members killed in Canadian operations since the Boer War. It goes up annually from about Halloween to Remembrance Day and is promptly taken down on November 12. It is somewhat reminiscent, at least in appearance, to Arlington Cemetery in Washington D.C. Flag raising ceremonies take place every morning between November 1 and 11 culminating with a Remembrance Day ceremony that has been increasingly well attended since 2009. The installation (and the ceremonies) are open to the public.

Chapter Eight approaches the Field of Crosses as an arena of engagement in which processes of public remembering and sense memory operate simultaneously, transforming civilian visitors to the installation into witnesses of veterans' release bereavement. Following Bennett's theorization of affect, and for the sake of analysis, I approach the Field of Crosses as an art installation: the veterans who erected it as both artists and (re) experiencers of grief and trauma, and the visitors who gather to wander the rows as the artists' (veterans') audience. Drawing on Bennett and Casey, I suggest that the co-presence of those civilians and veterans (audience and artists) who made up a temporary community gathered in public remembering November 11 of 2013 and 2014, combined with the embodied experience of civilians and veterans moving through the Field of Crosses, may have triggered affective encounters for some civilians. Interpreting one of the riding community's mandates, the artist/veterans who built the installation worked to engender in their audience/visitors a sense of their own losses and sacrifices,

effecting for the duration of the Field of Crosses experience, an emplacing arena of engagement.

What is essentially an alienating and distancing experience—the memory of the trauma of loss—thus becomes one that is mediated through affective connections between bodies (Bennett 2002: 337).

Throughout the year, veteran riding community members mutually acknowledged each other's military experiences at various riding and community events. While the public remembering community was in place on Remembrance Day at the Field of Crosses, however, civilian visitors also acknowledged veterans by becoming witnesses to their losses:

It is the sense memory of grief embodied in the other that touches the onlooker who understands at a certain point the implications of his/ her presence at the scene. The affective “prick” occurs when one has the realization “I am in this scene,” it affects me, I am a witness (Bennett 2002: 348).

1.4.4 Moving in place

Civilians visiting the Field of Crosses experienced affective encounters with the installation by walking through it with, and sometimes also talking to, veterans. Such movement, along with all the discursive and non-discursive activity embedded in it, constituted an arena of engagement at the installation—a place, if only a temporary one. As is discussed in Chapter Seven, the road was also constituted as a place among community riding members through motorcycle riding. Drawing on relevant mobilities theory, I want to discuss in this section some of the ways in which movement in and through geographic space can constitute place (Spinney 2009: 712).

From the perspective of mobilities theory, mobility is a comprehensive notion comprising not just human movement through geographic space but, importantly, human

interactions—between humans, between humans and the environment, and between humans, the environment and all kinds of objects and technologies (Jensen 2009). Also entangled within these encounters are practices and representations of movement (Cresswell 2010b). The purpose of critical mobility thinking is to problematize “sedentarist” perspectives in the social sciences that treat fixity and stability as the normal and natural characteristics of human experience, whilst approaching conditions of non-fixity and change as abnormal or place-less (Malkki 1992; Cresswell 2010a; Cresswell 2010b; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006). The mobilities approach also seeks to complicate nomadic theories that tend towards a celebration of “travel and flight” (Sheller and Urry 2006: 210).

One of the ways in which mobilities theory moves beyond “sedentary and nomad conceptualizations” (Jensen 2009: 155) is by ceasing to distinguish between practical activity and travel (Sheller and Urry 2006: 213). Ole Jensen argues, for example, that because so much of contemporary urban practical activity occurs in motion and between fixed sites, such activity deserves proper attention as social environments of “meaningful interaction” (2009: 149). Moreover, by ceasing to approach ‘travel’ as strictly instrumental, researchers can better recognize how practical activity in motion—how mobility itself—produces place (2009: 154).

Secondly, mobilities theory moves beyond other conceptualizations of mobility by concentrating less on setting sedentary and nomad approaches in opposition to each other and instead looking critically at both—at mobility itself as generated through contexts of

friction and flow (Merriman 2004; Jensen 2009). Specifically, Kevin Hannam, Mimi

Sheller and John Urry refer to the fast and slow lanes of social life:

Analysing mobilities... involves examining many consequences for different peoples and places located in what we might call the fast and slow lanes of social life. There is the proliferation of places, technologies and 'gates' that enhance the mobilities of some while reinforcing the immobilities, or demobilization, of others (2006: 11).

Accordingly, Tim Cresswell argues that forms of mobility like walking and driving, or, relevant to this thesis, motorcycle riding, and the ways in which such forms of mobility are represented and practiced in everyday life, are "implicated in the production of power and relations of domination" (2010b: 20). He argues that the differential distribution of mobility as a major resource significantly contributes to unequal power relations cross-culturally, and that interrogation of these relations are essential to understanding the politics of mobility.

Riding community members generally enjoyed relatively unobstructed access to mobility as a resource. For this reason, they likely occupied the 'fast lanes' more often than the slow ones (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 11; Creswell 2010b: 22-26).

Certainly, they rode for leisure, and the speed and character of their movement was restricted most days only by the rules of the road; even though, what some participants refer to as 'biker stigma' occasionally impeded their efforts to be received by the larger veteran community in equal esteem as was held for older veterans. They rode by choice and because they found riding to be enjoyable. On weekends and holidays, they rode where and when they desired. Veteran riding community members' movement on the road and through larger veteran and civilian communities was therefore not significantly

hindered by their biker/veteran-ness, although it was somewhat hindered. Riding together did, however, play a role in mitigating some of the harsher challenges of their transitions into civilian society following release from their military careers.

Chapter Seven focuses on how learning and practice worked together to create a sense of emplacement among community members. Motorcycle riding constituted in these contexts not only sense of place but also sense of self; and I found these processes easier to uncover by approaching them from relevant mobilities perspectives that attend to affect. Whereas places have tended to be approached as fixed and separate from the people who visit them, some mobilities theorists argue for a relational paradigm in which places and people are connected through practical activity occurring in motion (Sheller and Urry 2006; Jensen 2009). For Justin Spinney, bodies engaged in practical activity while moving through geographic space may constitute what he calls “alternative prerepresentational” processes of emplacement; this is an affective sense of place that is shared and immediately experienced yet difficult to articulate (2009: 712). Spinney’s notion of pre-representational place is particularly useful for examining the processes through which community riding members experienced motorcycle riding as emplacing.

In his discussion of kinesthesia and the meanings of pain, Spinney cites bicycling enthusiasts who talked with him about their experiences of riding Mont Ventoux in Southern France. The cyclists describe the ascent as simultaneously painful and pleasurable. In his effort to understand the cyclists’ seemingly inconsistent description of their shared, embodied experiences, Spinney rejects representational explanations that either interpret the experience of pain as “masculine endeavor” or re-interpret pain as

pleasure (2009: 726). Instead, he demonstrates the added value of attention to affective experience for ethnography:

I contend that the removal of the sensory experience of pain from its context in ascent allows it to be disconnected from practice and attached to other extrasomatic moral and cultural ideals, consequently evacuating it of its contextual meaning and origins (2009: 726-727).

Spinney goes on to suggest that what the cyclists derived pleasure from was less the experience of pain itself and more their sense of accomplishment at having successfully controlled and rationed their discomfort whilst ascending the mountain. Recalling Fentress and Wickham and also Bennett, while Spinney's cyclists shared affective knowledge of the ascent, such knowledge remained difficult to convey to those who did not share it. Therefore, they chose a word, pain, which came 'close enough'.

In the representation of riders' own culture to others, perhaps the absence of suitable referents does not allow an adequate comparison between their own sensory practices and experiences and those of others (Spinney 2009: 727).

Spinney argues that his ethnography of climbing Mont Ventoux, including his affective interpretation of pain and the cycling practices he witnessed and heard talked about, was rendered more insightful because he also ascended and shared those immediate experiences with his participants. He contrasts his embodied, pre-objective interpretations of cycling practice with textual, representational ones as part of his argument that affective insight is essential to understanding the construction of place through bodies in motion (2009: 716). In Chapter Seven I draw on his notion of pre-representational place, along with my own experiences of riding with participants as a passenger, to articulate the connections between being and becoming a veteran, riding motorcycles with others and the conditions and qualities of 'freedom' — a word many

participants chose in order to convey to me a shared nexus of affective memory, affective experience, and affective knowledge which constituted both a moving place and processes of emplacement on the road. Also constituted within this moving ‘freedom’ nexus were processes of identification wrapped up in Euro-North American cultural representations of motorcycle riding, speed and risk (Jensen 2009: 154; Pinch and Reimer 2012: 445), and Canadian military representations of service and release.

Where mobilities theory establishes ways in which place may be constituted through embodied movement, among veteran riding group members, place was additionally constructed through embodied learning. In Chapter Seven I draw on Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger to demonstrate how approaching the veteran riding community from the perspective of social learning relates to processes of identification which played a role in mitigating some of the challenges veterans described facing during their transition into civilian society following release from the military. In their book, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, Lave and Wenger argue that insight into the creation of more effective learning environments in workplaces can be gained by focusing on the socialization of new members into informal groups of people who practice an activity together (1991). The authors refer to such groups as “communities of practice”.

Wenger describes a community of practice as a “social learning system” made up of sets of relationships between people, their environment, and an activity, that exist over time and in relation to other tangential social learning systems (2010: 181; Lave and Wenger 1991: 98). In a community of practice, newcomers spend time observing and

performing simple tasks before they eventually become experienced ‘old timers’.

Cristina Grasseni, citing Lave and Wenger, notes that this relational approach to learning not only facilitates understanding of how members are socialized into and relate to their activities, that of their co-participants, and the community’s systems of organization (2007: 216). It also facilitates understanding of how the community itself generates modes of perception, criteria for moral and aesthetic evaluation, principles of competence and good practice, rituals of participation, and perhaps even ideological and political stances (Grasseni 2007: 216). Lave and Wenger maintain that an essential aspect of social learning in a community of practice also involves processes of transformation and identification:

As an aspect of social practice, learning involves the whole person; it implies not only a relation to specific activities, but a relation to social communities—it implies becoming a full participant, a member, a kind of person. In this view, learning... implies becoming able to be involved in new activities, to perform new tasks and functions, to master new understandings. Activities, tasks, functions, and understandings do not exist in isolation; they are part of broader systems of relations in which they have meaning. These systems of relations arise out of and are reproduced and developed within social communities, which are in part systems of relations among persons. The person is defined by as well as defines these relations. Learning thus implies becoming a different person with respect to the possibilities enabled by these systems of relations. To ignore this aspect of learning is to overlook the fact that learning involves the construction of identities (Lave and Wenger 1991: 53).

Members of a community of practice learn how to become particular ‘kinds of people’ through various forms of participation including what Wenger refers to as “engagement” (2000: 227), and what riding group members often called ‘doing things’ together. In the riding community engagement included, for example, riding in formation, participation in remembrance events, attending monthly meetings, talking, and sharing

memories and stories. Following Lave and Wenger, as new members gained competency and experience by so engaging with other members they were simultaneously becoming transformed into community practitioners (1991: 122). Of particular relevance here are the transformative aspects of contexts of social learning. Through engagement with other practitioners, newcomers become old-timers whilst the context of practice itself creates “the potential curriculum” (1991: 92). However, equally essential to this process argue Lave and Wenger, is the connection between “changing knowledge, skill and discourse” and sense of identification as a member of a community of practice. In the veteran riding community, while newcomers transformed themselves into old-timers through riding and remembrance events, simultaneously, dis-emplaced ex-service members transformed themselves into veteran bikers; a transformation many veterans described as emplacing.

Dis-emplacement is what I call the experience of loss of place, or loss of that sense of emplacement generated in arenas of engagement that answer the existential questions and imperatives. As part of his argument for embodied interpretation of experience in anthropology, Jackson insists that:

... When our familiar environment is suddenly disrupted we feel uprooted, we lose our footing, we are thrown, we collapse, we fall. But such falling is not... a mere manner of speaking; it is a shock and disorientation which occurs simultaneously in body and mind, and refers to a basic ontological structure of our Being-in-the-world (1983: 328).

Following their release from the military, veteran riding community members described experiencing, to varying degrees, deep nostalgia, ontological insecurity and a sense of loss that only grief seems to properly express. Although grief is usually associated with the loss of human beings to death or separation—and there were certainly riding

community members who lost people close to them to both scenarios during and following their military careers—it is my belief that people suffer the loss of place “with similar intensity” (Jackson 2008: 104). I use the term release bereavement as a context-specific concept to describe veterans’ experiences of dis-emplacement following their military release. Whereas Chapters Five and Six focus on the problem of release bereavement experienced by veteran riding group members from the perspective of emplacement and embodiment, Chapters Seven and Eight approach the riding group as a community of practice which offered veterans opportunities to learn and participate in a variety of potentially emplacing solutions.

1.5 Organization of the thesis

“Struggles arising from loss,” Basso reminds us, “are always placed” (1996: 11). The remaining chapters draw from this insight by situating veteran riding members’ struggles with very particular contexts of loss within a community of embodied social learning and practice. Chapter Two outlines the methodological approaches that informed the collection and analysis of the ethnographic data guiding the research project. Chapter Three provides background regarding the national context for veterans’ issues at the time of my fieldwork; including discussion of the New Veterans Charter. Chapter Four includes discussion of the organization and structure of the veteran motorcycle riding community with which I was involved.

Chapters Five and Six focus on two aspects of the experiences and processes of dis-emplacement: release bereavement and failures in acknowledgement. In Chapter Five, I link loss of habit, loss of lifestyle, and loss of kin to the interruption and complication of

post-release everyday life among veteran riding community members and their families. I focus on the relationship between the uprooting of retired veterans' senses of place—the situated wisdom, memory, learning and experience they gathered throughout their military careers—and the transition challenges many veterans have described to me. In Basso's terms, following release from the military, retired veterans' wisdom had nowhere to sit. Chapter Five relates release bereavement causally to the unseating of veterans' previously situated learning, and examines the ways in which this un-seating dys-appeared (Leder 1990) and haunted (Carsten 2007) many of them well after their military careers were over.

Many veterans also discussed with me their sense of having been let down by civilian society and government institutions following their release from the military. In Chapter Six, I approach some veterans' sense of never having been adequately acknowledged for their military sacrifices and contributions as wounding and sometimes re-traumatizing (Matsakis 1996). I link these failures in acknowledgement to veterans' sense of dis-emplacement following their military release.

Chapters Seven and Eight analyze the activities that riding community members participated in from the perspective of communities of practice. These chapters draw on phenomenological approaches to embodiment, memory and mobilities to demonstrate riding and remembrance in the motorcycling community as place making. They also include discussion of the transformative aspects of the skills members were afforded the opportunity to learn through their participation. Memory is approached in these chapters as relational and deployed by community members to perform the social tasks of

emplacement and acknowledgement (Carsten 2007; Lambek 2003; Fentress and Wickham 1992). Mobilities are similarly approached from the perspective of relationships between people and other people, between people and objects, and between people and the landscape (Urry 2000; Spinney 2006). These processes (mobility, memory and embodiment) intertwine in the generation of place and are not distinct from each other in the practices of riding and remembrance.

Chapter Seven examines motorcycle riding and the social processes of learning to be veteran bikers. Here I focus on veteran riding members' experiences of riding, for charity events and for recreation. The discussion addresses artifacts and the road environment, the appeal of motorcycling to veterans, veterans' acceptance of the physical risk inherent to motorcycle riding (Lyng 1990, 2004; Natalier 2001), and approaches membership in the veteran riding community as transformative. Also discussed in this chapter are 'patching in' rituals and the connections between the establishment of veteran-civilian trust and the mitigation of transition challenges. Chapter Eight focuses on various ways in which veteran riding community members deploy memory for the purposes of soliciting civilian acknowledgement, creating change, and restoring their sense of purpose. Here I examine the politics of remembrance in the riding community through discussion of various remembrance month (November) events, including the Field of Crosses and school visits.

Chapter Nine concludes the thesis by re-emphasizing that military release is a displacing experience for almost all veterans in the veterans riding community. In this chapter I reiterate my arguments and findings establishing the processes of post-release

dis-emplacement—release bereavement, the dys-appearance of military skills and habits, and post-release wounding experiences—as a problem. I also reiterate my argument that veteran members' participation in a mobilized community is re-emplacing, through their practices of motorcycle riding and the politics of remembrance.

Chapter Two: Methods

When I began my field research for this project I was interested in learning about the inter-relationships between the army's socialization of infantry soldiers into combat groups, the ways in which infantry soldiers and their civilian relatives talked about and practiced 'family,' and veterans' experiences of transition back into civilian society following their military careers. I soon realized, however, that the veterans I was getting to know were negotiating transition challenges not only in various contexts of family—marital, biological and fictive, for example—but also in the context of their relationships with civilians outside the riding group, and in relation to wider local and national conversations surrounding veterans and veteran-ness. I also discovered that the membership of the groups into which I was navigating entry was not made up exclusively of Army veterans. I therefore widened the scope of the project to include Canadian Forces veterans of the Navy and the Air Force as well. What follows is a discussion of how I located and negotiated entry to my field site and the methods I used to gather the ethnographic material that informs this thesis.

Through participant observation at monthly meetings and social gatherings, riding as a passenger on road trips, and volunteering at fund-raising and remembrance events, I became acquainted with regular group activities. Rapport-building and unstructured interviewing took place as well in these contexts of participant observation. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with riding community members. I collected further contextual and comparative data through semi-structured interviews with members of two additional non-riding groups: a Western Canada based veterans group, members of which

I met with in person, and an online veterans group, members of which I met with via Skype or over the phone. Altogether, the Canadian Forces veterans who participated in this research project include both officers and non-commissioned members. Addressing the difference between officers and non-commissioned members is therefore important before I discuss how I located a field site and recruited participants. It also provides important background information for understanding the riding community.

2.1 Background: officers and non-commissioned members

Ranks within the Canadian Forces indicate a service member's position within a hierarchical structure of authority (Hockey 1986: 3). Rank is achieved through training (generally including courses in leadership and technology) and experience (Irwin 2002: 62). The distinction between ranks in the Canadian Forces that is relevant to this discussion is between officers and non-commissioned members. According to the Queen's Regulations and Orders (QR&Os) an officer is:

- a. a person who holds Her Majesty's commission in the Canadian Forces,
- b. a person who holds the rank of officer cadet in the Canadian Forces, and
- c. any person who pursuant to law is attached or seconded as an officer to the Canadian Forces (2017b: www.forces.gc.ca).

Non-commissioned members, service members who do not hold the Queen's commission, make up everyone else (www.canada.ca). In garrison, the difference between officers and non-commissioned members is reinforced in a variety of ways; including, visually, as different insignia on the uniform, and socially and spatially through separate mess halls and living quarters (Hockey 1986: 3; Irwin 2002: 66). Officers, very generally speaking, are involved with "setting policy," the "planning of operations and training, and with personnel administration" (Irwin 2002: 72). Non-commissioned

officers or NCOs (NCOs, for my purposes, are non-commissioned members above the rank of private) are responsible for the “dress, drill and deportment” of the troops below them, as well as the troops’ day-to-day routine (Irwin 2002: 72). NCOs assign tasks, make sure the troops are fed, clothed and sheltered, and make sure troops have available and in good condition all necessary supplies and tools (Irwin 2002: 72-80). Because NCOs are in such “daily, intimate contact with troops” they are also responsible for reporting to officers on the troops’ morale and physical wellbeing (Irwin 2002: 80).

Wade, a retired senior officer and member of the non-riding group, further described officers as managers, and non-commissioned members as the various individuals who labour for them:

Wade: You know because corporals and privates have different experiences than senior NCOs which are sergeants (and) warrants... and then there’s officers which have certainly yet a different take on life and then there’s junior officers and senior officers. So even between those two you know grades or classes if you want to call it that. So um there’s a whole different perspective on how people have viewed their career. I mean you’ve spoken to a lot of people that have swept the hangar floor.

Karen: Uh yeah. Mostly.

Wade: And I’m the guy that told them to sweep the hangar floor.

Karen: Yep. I haven’t talked to a lot of officers.

Wade: So that’s—there’s a real difference and so of these guys you know, I got out of the military because I was frigging tired of sweeping the hangar floor... And uh but from an officer perspective it’s management. You are in a managerial position. With varying numbers of people working for you. So I mean you’ll get a spectrum. So you need to be careful of that too.

Karen: Yep.

Wade: I toss that out.

It is worth noting that in the above interview excerpt, Wade used the “hangar floor” somewhat metaphorically to represent the chain of command to me, a civilian researcher. Non-commissioned members and officers alike retire from the Canadian Forces for a wide variety of reasons that are not at all related to being tasked with “sweeping the hangar floor,” including, as is briefly addressed in Chapter Three, medical release.

Nevertheless, social scientists have similarly demonstrated the difference between officers and non-commissioned members by comparing it to class differences in Canadian or British society; white-collar workers as compared to blue-collar workers, for example (Hockey 1986; Irwin 2002). Before the early 2000s, officers more typically started their military careers having completed post-secondary education whereas it was common for non-commissioned members to enter the Canadian Forces right out of high school, sometimes without having completed high school. Since the early 2000s however it has become increasingly more common for non-commissioned members to have completed high school as well as post-secondary degrees, or perhaps one or two years at a university or college (Irwin 2002: 82; Park 2008: 22-23).

According to Hockey, the British Army (much like the Canadian Forces) functions to protect the state against external and internal threats to its power through the “implementation and management of violence” (1986: 2). One aspect of official reasoning for the division of labour, suggests Hockey, is that the social organization of “fundamental distinctions” between those who manage violence (officers) and those who apply it (non-commissioned members) is key to efficient operationalization of those functions (1986: 2). Anthropologists and sociologists of the military have

correspondingly analyzed how Canadian and British officers and non-commissioned members interpret the division of labour practically and unofficially, and how they negotiate contested social spaces both in garrison and on operations (Hockey 1986; Irwin 2002; Kirke 2006; Samuels 2009).

With a single exception, the veteran riding community was made up of non-commissioned members. I spoke with both officers and non-commissioned members in the local non-riding group. The on-line veterans group also included non-commissioned members and officer members. Neither the relationship between officers and non-commissioned members in general, or between veteran members of the riding community and veteran members of the local non-riding group in particular, is a major focus of this analysis. However, the ways in which officers and non-commissioned members practically negotiated shared social space during their military careers informed not only how they talked to each other (and to me) about their experiences in the military, but also their interactions post-release. Indeed, recalling Casey's argument for the tenacity and subjection of place,¹ pre-release divisions of labour persisted at the two fundraising events I attended with veteran members of both groups (Casey 2001a: 688). While retired officers and retired non-commissioned members worked together efficiently, respectfully, and most importantly, voluntarily; their organization of the work—in this case the management and implementation of running routes and seating arrangements rather than the management and implementation of violence—mimicked military divisions of labour. My observations of how these relationships carried over into post-release contexts would

¹ See Chapter 1.4.1 for details on tenacity and subjection of place.

have been impossible for me to make had I not followed Wade's advice to pursue diverse perspectives on military careers, including those of retired officers. The information shared with me by the handful of retired senior officers I recruited through the non-riding group helped me better understand riding members' experiences of being 'in', and ultimately transitioning out of, the military.

2.2 Locating a field site

Doing research with veterans is very different than working with actively serving Canadian Forces members who all live and work in one place, a Canadian Forces Base. My first challenge was therefore to locate a field site. An Internet search for Canadian veteran's groups in Western Canada generated a short list of groups whose members lived locally and gathered both physically and regularly. Two groups further caught my interest because their website described some of the activities they participated in together; including fundraising for Canadian Forces veterans and their families, and for one group, motorcycle-riding. Both groups also posted email addresses for their executive officers on their websites. I contacted long-standing members for each of these groups with an email in which I introduced my research and myself and asked to further discuss the project over the phone. I also directly messaged a long-standing member of an online Canadian veteran's group. Glenn,² a long-standing member of the veteran motorcycle riding community, responded to my email. We arranged to talk on the phone the following day. During that conversation, Glenn told me about the group, its members, and some of the

² The name Glenn is a pseudonym. I have used pseudonyms for all the participants who have been cited by me in this thesis. The National Veterans Riding Organization (the NVMO), how I refer to the veterans riding community in this thesis, is also a pseudonym.

work they do in the community in support of veterans and veterans' families. We also briefly discussed his military career. I indicated my interest in learning more about his experiences and those of other members and asked him if I could introduce my research to the membership sometime, and invite any members who were interested to participate. This was early August, and Glenn was finalizing the details on a barbeque he was organizing for the group at a city park. He invited me to the barbeque as an opportunity to meet members and, he said, to see if I wanted to work with the group. I took the reverse to be simultaneously implicit in his invitation.

The barbeque was not a fundraising or remembrance event but rather an opportunity for members to relax together, celebrate a recent and successful fundraising achievement, and use up hamburgers and soft drinks that were not consumed during that event. Children and spouses attended as well. At the barbeque I spoke some more with Glenn and met many of the individuals who made up what participants would later frequently refer to as the core of the group's more active membership. The barbeque was an important gatekeeping event in the process of my navigating entry into the riding community because it was here that Glenn confirmed his intention to put me on the group mailing list. The mailing list was the main means by which executive officers communicated to the membership regarding the timing of monthly meetings, the agendas for discussion at meetings, and the timing, locations and information relevant to attending other group events like rides, remembrance activities, and fundraisers. I received my first group email in early October; for me, this amounted to an access pass.

In the initial stages of negotiating the possibility of access to the riding community, I was simultaneously approaching a non-riding veterans group whose members met monthly in Western Canada. As with Glenn, I sent a long-standing member of this group, Otis, an introduction email describing my research and asking if we could discuss over the phone the possibility of my presenting the project to members and inviting their participation. When we spoke in early September, Otis briefly told me about the group and some activities organized by the membership; mostly these included regular meetings at a local Royal Canadian Legion and a casino night fundraiser in support of Canadian Forces veterans and their families. Otis told me that there was an executive meeting scheduled that month during which he would bring up my research project for discussion with the other executive officers. If they responded positively, Otis told me, he would invite me to attend the October general meeting; where I could present my research project to the membership in attendance that evening and recruit interested participants. Otis phoned me again a few days following the September meeting to inform me that the executive officers had approved my attendance for the October general meeting; and to give me its time and location.

Otis' non-riding group was organized around members' identification of themselves and each other as veterans of Canadian peacekeeping missions. At the general meeting, executive officers and members in attendance discussed the business on that evening's agenda. Among other topics, it included: group merchandise for sale, possibly bringing in a guest speaker to talk about operational stress injuries (to which a few members murmured, 'its too late for us'), and motioning to grant honorary membership to

the wife of a recently deceased member. Lastly, Otis announced my presence as a guest. Following his introduction, I briefly spoke to the group about my project, myself, and invited anyone interested in participating to let me know after the meeting was concluded.

I decided soon after to focus my research on the veteran riding community and locate my fieldwork in the context of their activities. Based on what I was learning in my first two months of searching for a field site, I believed the riding community offered me deeper participation and observation opportunities for three reasons: 1) its membership met more frequently; 2) they participated in more diverse activities together; and 3) unlike the non-riding group, the veteran riding community offered member status to non-veteran supporters, including veterans' spouses. I did, nevertheless, recruit nine individuals at the non-riding group meeting who eventually participated in the project by sitting down with me for semi-structured interviews.

Although my involvement with the non-riding group was comparatively limited, through it, I learned that some members of both groups knew each other and occasionally worked together in fundraising (in support of veterans and their families) and remembrance contexts taking place around the city. Sometimes their membership even overlapped; at least one riding community veteran, for example, was a member of both groups. Twice I attended events where members of both groups worked together: at a fundraising 10K run organized by a (civilian) father who lost his son on operations in Afghanistan, and at a Peacekeeper's Day memorial ceremony (Peacekeeper's Day commemorates August 9, 1974, when an aircraft carrying nine Canadian peacekeepers was shot down over Syria). Of the nine individuals I recruited for interviews through the

non-riding group, six were veterans. Of those six veterans, five served as senior officers during their military careers and one served as a senior non-commissioned member. In comparison, veteran membership of the riding community—which I discuss in detail in Chapter Four—was with a single exception made up of former non-commissioned members.

In addition to the participants I accessed through the non-riding group, I recruited several participants through a veteran activist group's Facebook page. These five individuals contacted me through the Facebook group to indicate their interest in being interviewed. In a Facebook message to the group's founder, Robert, I introduced myself, described my project, and asked if we could discuss it more over the phone. Robert phoned me the same day. During our conversation, Robert told me about the membership, the group's relationship with policy makers in Ottawa, and some of the challenges facing Canadian Forces veterans across Canada; including operational stress injuries, homelessness, and suicide. An important aspect of the group's purpose, he told me, was to raise public awareness of veterans' issues and struggles. Robert gave me permission to post an invitation to participate in my research on the group's Facebook page. Initially, I received no responses. A few days later I posted it again. This time, Robert endorsed my project by attaching a comment. With his endorsement a few members of the group responded with interest. Five individuals eventually agreed to be interviewed by phone or via Skype. All of them had served as non-commissioned members.

The interviews I conducted with members of the two non-riding groups provided me with additional background and contextual information, which helped me make sense

of everyday goings on in the riding community. This data also informs my discussion of the New Veterans Charter, which I address in Chapter Three. First, however, I will address the methods I used, and the approaches that informed my choice to use them. My analysis is based on data gathered through participant observation, unstructured interviewing, and semi-structured interviewing.

2.3 Methods: participating and observing

My plan for observation was to attend and participate in as many riding community gatherings as I could for the duration of my fieldwork (summer 2012-spring 2014).

During the riding season, from about April to October, such gatherings of course included motorcycle riding. Members sometimes rode amongst themselves and sometimes participated, along with other biker groups and unaffiliated riders, in rides for charity. They rode for enjoyment and to spend time with one another. Beyond the riding itself, members got together for barbeques, pub visits and monthly meetings. During the off-season they arranged a Christmas party and sometimes met for bowling or at a local shooting range. Riding community gatherings included a variety of non-riding (although sometimes still motorcycle related) fundraising activities as well, such as an annual veteran food drive, a show ‘n shine,³ and activities related to growing the membership, such as setting up a booth at the Calgary Motorcycle Show. All of the above activities fit under the riding community’s official mandates, which at the time of my fieldwork was “riding, having fun and helping others” (Constitution Ver 1.4 November 2013: 13). The

³ Show ‘n Shine was a fundraising event. Members and riders outside the veterans riding community displayed their motorcycles for members of the public to enjoy and rate. Admission to the event went to support various veterans’ charities in the city. During my fieldwork, a local hotel and a museum hosted the event.

membership also participated in a variety of what I call remembrance events. These events included erecting the Field of Crosses every November and accepting invitations from local middle and high schools for veterans to speak to students in Calgary about their military experiences.

My participation in riding and remembrance gatherings made it possible for me to observe everyday practical activity in the riding community, which was essential to building rapport with both veteran and non-veteran community members. In the context of participating and observing I also conducted many unstructured interviews, or what Charlotte Davies refers to as, “open and meaningful discussions with informants” (1999: 71, 94). One important aspect of unstructured interviewing, according to Davies, is that such discussions take place where researchers and informants have an ongoing relationship; that is, they have encountered each other previously and will encounter each other again in the future (Davies 1999: 94). Through talking, riding and working with riding community members I learned, among other things, about how members related to each other (and to me), what riding and remembrance activities meant to members, and how veteran and non-veteran informants benefited from membership (Davies 1999: 107). This contextual information further helped me to develop semi-structured interview schedules and narrow the focus of the project (Bernard 2011: 172).

According to Davies, it is important for researchers to reflexively locate themselves in their ethnographic writing (1999). Researchers, she reminds us, must be “sensitive to the nature of, and conditions governing, their own participation” (1999: 73). Indeed, I began to notice some quite salient conditions governing my own participation

during one of my earliest conversations with Glenn. Retired military members of the riding community usually described themselves to me as veterans of the Cold War and (or) veterans of Canadian peacekeeping missions that took place in the 1990s; particularly, United Nations operations in the Balkans. Although he did not say so explicitly, Glenn's decision to invite me into the riding community was directly related to his tour with the United Nations Protection Forces and his experiences upon returning to Canada following his tour. In the interview excerpt below, Glenn discusses civilian lack of familiarity with United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia in Canada:

It wasn't until Medak Pocket happened where the United Nations finally says, okay this what you're gonna do. You need to pick a force that will do it. And the Canadians went in. Second battalion, PPCLI went in and says yeah, you're not getting' by us. And we're gonna roll you up. You know. And of course Canada—after that act of bravery and commitment from its sons, sons and daughters in harm's way in the former republic of Yugoslavia—hid it. Didn't tell anybody a damn thing. That our Army had done anything that was worth note, that was noteworthy, nothing with any honour. There was honour, integrity. We did the right thing. We fought a good fight, we fought the hard fight and we did it because it was the right thing to do and it never hit the press... The legacy of the tour in Yugoslavia is simply this: it's all bullshit, none of it ever happened. Because if it did something that big would have been in the news...

Historian Sean M. Maloney similarly notes that despite his own interest in Canada's military involvement in the Balkans, he was:

Struck at the time by the lack of in-depth media coverage of Canadian operations... Only occasionally did the world television media mention events involving Canadian troops and there was little in-depth print analysis of what they did why they did it (2002: xiii).

Throughout my fieldwork, I understood that in exchange for my access I would act as a kind of witness to the struggles with which veteran members of these lesser publicized operations lived; and while no one ever told me explicitly that my testimony was a

condition of my access, I was thanked more than once for being a Canadian civilian taking serious interest in their experiences and helping with their efforts to support the city's larger community of veterans.

Some social scientists suggest that the “trust and conversational intimacy” potentially generated in the contexts of unstructured interviewing and rapport building can generate ethical questions (Corbin and Morse 2003: 338). Jean Duncombe and Julie Jessop, for example, cite situations wherein the researchers' performance of friendship in exchange for data potentially activated a false sense of security in their informants, some of whom consequently revealed more sensitive material to the researchers than they otherwise might have (Duncombe and Jessop 2011: Conclusion). Juliet Corbin and Janet Morse, instead, emphasize the reciprocal, interactive aspect of unstructured interviewing in the context of sensitive topics:

Participants, in agreeing to participate in a study, usually do so because they want something in return even though they themselves might not be consciously aware what this is. Sometimes they want validation that they are recovering or are a good person despite what might have happened to them. Sometimes they desire information, such as about an illness or possible services. Often they need to unburden and there is no one else to whom they can turn to tell their story. A frequent reason cited by persons for consenting or requesting to participate in a study is the hope that telling their story will help others (2003: 342).

Veteran riding community members told each other stories all the time, and according to them, one of the most important benefits of membership in the riding community was the opportunity it afforded veterans for unburdening, or burden sharing, amongst each other. Relevant to Corbin and Morse's perspective on the reciprocal aspects of unstructured interviewing however, riding community members often talked explicitly about the connections between their decision to participate in my research project, and their

ongoing goals of raising public awareness of their experiences with less publicized Canadian peacekeeping operations, and helping other veterans and their families to navigate various challenges related to transitioning back into civilian society following release from the military. Corbin and Morse acknowledge that discussing sensitive topics in the context of unstructured interviews might, for some informants, cause emotional distress that “may not be counterbalanced by the opportunity to talk” (2003: 338). However, the authors further suggest that such individuals are less likely to volunteer to talk to researchers in the first place (2003: 338). More generally, their point is to remind us that much like the data informing this thesis, the “ethical realities” (Corbin and Morse 2003: 348) of unstructured interviewing in particular and ethnographic fieldwork in general are co-constructed by researcher and participants alike (Davies 1991).

My own awareness of this project as a reciprocal encounter co-produced by researcher and informants further stood out to me in the context of empathetic listening, a concept used by some social scientists working with individuals who live with fatal illness and survivors of torture (Watts 2008; Ullman 2006; Boulanger 2008, 2012). My own approach to empathetic listening, or, “... listening with concern and compassion but without judgement” (Watts 2008: 9), draws on Corbin and Morse’s discussion of reciprocity in the context of ethnographic fieldwork and Boulanger’s perspective on moral witnessing in the context of treating adult patients of psychological trauma (2008, 2012).

Ghislaine Boulanger, a psychologist, identifies two aspects of empathetic listening that are also relevant to locating myself reflexively in this thesis. The distinction she

makes between, first, witnessing and recognition, and, second, the analyst's position of "involved otherness," a concept that draws on Chana Ullman (Boulanger 2008: 651-653, Ullman 2006). Recognition, according Boulanger, occurs when psychologists "resonate to situations in their patients' lives with which they can identify" (2008: 652).

Psychologists can relate to such situations because, for example, they may themselves have experienced similar situations. In contrast, witnessing occurs when psychologists cannot relate. Such situations are far outside the sphere of their own experiences.

Examples might include the experiences of adult survivors of torture and traumatic violence. All psychologists cannot relate to such experiences. They can only witness them; which requires a degree of imagination (Boulanger 2012: 321, 2008: 652). The phrase, "involved otherness," describes clinicians' "acknowledgement" of their "necessary separateness in such instances" (Boulanger 2008: 652; Ullman 2006: 181, 196).

According to Boulanger, the curative aspect of witnessing involves restoring subjectivity to survivors whose traumatic experiences have made them feel like objects of violence, and also restoring a sense of reality to experiences so violent that survivors have consequently disassociated from them (2012, 2008). Crucial to the psychologist's role as witness in such contexts is her capacity to not only listen to a survivor's denied reality but also to testify to it publicly, thereby restoring it (2008, 2012). Boulanger describes the curative aspect of witnessing the reality of a refugee who sought political asylum in the United States:

In my subsequent conversations with Celeste, I learned that knowing that I was a separate person who had voluntarily stepped into her experience, that I was

prepared to bear witness to this experience, and bear up under the experience began the process of reanimating her object world, and reduced her sense of having been rendered untouchable by her rapists (2008: 652).

Ullman further emphasizes that, beyond the process of witnessing itself, for empathetic listening to be curative, the witness' testimony must also be done for "moral purpose" (2006: 183). Testimony is moral, according to Ullman, where its purpose is to document the realities of human suffering rather than for personal interests such as, "to tell an interesting story or to break news" (2006: 183). A context of witnessing for moral purpose would therefore include, for example, Boulanger's testimony of Celeste's reality at her Immigration and Naturalization Service's hearings (2008: 638). Witnessing for moral purpose occurs here from a perspective of "involved otherness" (Boulanger 2008: 652; Ullman 2006: 181, 196). Boulanger acknowledges that she cannot relate to Celeste's experience, but she can witness it, and she can get involved in the process of making it heard for the purposes of healing and helping.

In the context of this research project, veteran riding community members were able to recognize and relate to each other's experiences. I could only witness them. Any attempt to reflectively locate myself in this thesis therefore requires that I identify my role as a moral witness to the realities of some informants who were living with post-traumatic stress disorder; whether or not I was always completely comfortable with that role. Moreover, I, of course, am not a clinical psychologist, nor was I working with political refugees who were also survivors of traumatic psychological and physical violence. Some veteran riding community members were living with operational stress injuries sustained during their military careers, however. As noted by Boulanger, "meeting out violence can

be as psychologically destructive as being the victim of violence” (2008: 641). Recalling Corbin and Morse’s discussion of the reciprocity inherent in the processes of fieldwork, then, it was clear to me that several informants decided to participate in my research project in exchange for my moral testimony, in the form of this thesis. Members, more or less explicitly, reminded me often of the co-constructive reality of our encounters.

2.4 Methods: semi-structured interviewing

When I began my fieldwork with the riding community, in accordance with fieldwork training and experience, I intended to begin arranging semi-structured interviews after a period of participant observation. According to many authors, ideally, the researcher uses this time to acquire, at least, “some basic knowledge of the structure of social relationships and the complex of underlying cultural meanings in the society in which they are working” (Davies 1991: 107). While I was able to arrange for most of the interviews I conducted with riding community members after completing a few months of participant observation with the group, there were two exceptions: Glenn, and Ian and Amber. I interviewed Glenn at his home before I attended my first monthly meeting, and Ian and Amber at a coffee shop shortly following the first monthly meeting I attended. I see these interviews as having simultaneously served as gate keeping and witnessing encounters. In addition to numerous unstructured interviews as part of participant observation, I conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews with fifteen riding community members including ten veterans and five spouses.

Members self-selected single interviewing or interviewing as a couple; nine members chose to be interviewed alone, four members chose to be interviewed along with

their spouses, and one member participated in an interview partly with his wife and partly alone. When contacting a member for an interview, usually by email, I suggested meeting at a coffee shop convenient to them. Seven members chose to meet at various coffee shops locations in Western Alberta, seven members suggested we conduct our interview in their homes, and one member suggested we conduct our interview at their workplace. The duration of the interviews also varied. The shortest interview was about fifty minutes long and the longest interview was about five hours long. The duration of the rest fell in between. I followed the same process for arranging interviews with individuals outside the riding community. I interviewed twelve veterans who were not riding community members and three spouses of veterans who were not riding community members. These interviews took place at various locations; including, coffee shops, people's homes, and over Skype. They lasted between one and five hours in duration.

In this chapter I have described how I located the field site for this research project. I have also discussed how I negotiated access to the field site and recruited participants from three veterans groups: a local veterans riding community, a local non-riding veterans association, and, an online veterans advocacy group. I have additionally outlined the methods I used to gather the ethnographic material that informs this thesis, and explained my choice of them. I turn now to the history of veterans' advocacy for government support in Canada.

Chapter Three

Historical Context: The Need for A Family of Veterans

According to the November 2013 version of the veteran riding community's constitution, members "... have no interest in any form of politics, religion or power" (2013: 27).

However, I occasionally observed executive officers remind members that, "we are not political". One example was when a veteran suggested the community make the premier of Alberta an honorary community member following her attendance at a Remembrance Day ceremony at the Field of Crosses. Although the constitution prohibited official gatherings or maneuverings of the group for political aims, several members were nevertheless individually active with various veterans' advocacy groups. This topic was also, at the time, generating national public interest in the New Veterans Charter (NVC). During the period of my fieldwork for this project, national conversation in the media regarding veterans' issues revolved mostly around two topics: veteran advocacy in the context of the New Veterans Charter, and, a cluster of soldier suicides that took place all within a week in late 2013, sparking renewed discussion in the news about Canadian soldiers and operational stress injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

In this chapter, I discuss the historical context of the veterans benefit system in Canada in the time periods following World War I and World War II, and, during the war in Afghanistan (including the New Veterans Charter). I also discuss some veterans' struggles with what many perceive as an imperfect system, and how such struggle can additionally burden the members of a veteran's household. Veterans' relationship with Canada's benefits system, over time, has been a contentious one. Often, veterans had to

advocate themselves for any improvements. The historical context of this struggle informed participants' preference for a veteran community, one they often described as their veteran family.

3.1 Providing for World War I veterans

The New Veterans Charter, as it existed when I was doing my fieldwork, evolved out of circumstances surrounding the return of soldiers to Canada following the First and Second World Wars (Neary 1998: 4). Desmond Morton has argued that in 1914, when Canadian soldiers became involved in World War I, what benefits existed for veterans had changed little from those established by private charities almost a century before; for example, The Patriotic Fund, created during the War of 1812 and slightly revised in 1899 for the Boer War (1998: 15). “Managed with the whims and wisdom of the powerful” and ignoring “those they found undeserving” (Morton 1998: 15), such charities were replaced by the Military Hospitals Commission (MHC) in 1915, established by the government of Canada (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 4).

More consistent in its aims, the MHC was established to care for sick and injured veterans who had returned from the war; by 1918, the organization was running a network of at least 50 veterans hospitals across Canada (Morton 1998: 17; Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 4). The MHC leadership asserted that while care for returning, disabled veterans was properly the responsibility of the state, the re-establishment of veterans who were not physically disabled during the war more or less fell to the good will of “patriotic employers” who “would take back their former workers” (Morton 1998: 16). With the creation of the Department of Soldiers' Civil Re-establishment (DSCR) in

1918, the MHC transferred most of its medical hospitals to the Army and focused instead on the “rehabilitation” of disabled veterans, mostly via vocational training (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 4). According to Morton, while the DSCR focused its efforts on disabled veterans, it did offer “physically fit” veterans some help finding jobs (1998: 21).

Following “a series of actions to meet the wartime emergency” of increasing numbers of wounded veterans returning from Europe to an economically depressed Canada, parliament passed the Pension Act in 1919 (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 4). Under the Pension Act, eligible veterans were entitled to disability pensions but the eligibility criteria were both complex and limiting (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 6). According to Morton, they were also “cheap” for parliament in the long run because less than five percent of disabled veterans received the highest possible payment (1998: 18). Most eligible veterans, he argues, received only twenty-five percent of the top payment or less (1998: 18). Jeff Keshen similarly estimated that about 80 percent of veterans received less than half of the maximum payment (1998: 63). Morton links the establishment of Canada’s limiting and complex eligibility criteria to an “attributability” philosophy, informed by French and British pensions systems of the time, which measured eligibility according to how directly disability could be connected to service:

A gunshot wound or a battlefield amputation was easy though one suppurating head wound was attributed to a prewar mastoid operation. Was syphilitic paresis really due to a toilet seat at Camp Hughes? No. Could Lieutenant John Diefenbaker, painfully injured during training in England, seek a pension? Yes, said the pension commissioners, but only if his subsequent discomfort affected his prospects in the market for unskilled labour. Could a soldier knocked down by a bus in the London blackout make a claim? No... pensions were not insurance... (1998: 18).

Morton further links complicated eligibility criteria to the fears among Canadian government policy makers that disability pensions would hinder veterans' efforts to secure economic independence at a time when government funding for veterans was on the wane (Morton 1998: 18-25).

Disappointment with the Pension Act was consequently widespread among disabled veterans (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 6). Moreover, a post-war economic recession (and ultimately depression) put veterans and civilians in competition for work, leading to a job climate in which many disabled veterans who had been trained for vocations following their return to Canada were either unable to find work using their new skills, or, lost the jobs they had to able-bodied workers (Morton 1998: 22-27; Neary 2004: 6). Historians like Morton and Neary cite these circumstances as contributing factors to the emergence of veterans associations in communities across Canada (Morton 1998: 22-27, Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 6). Many of these associations gathered in Winnipeg in 1917 to form the Great War Veteran Association (GWVA). According to Morton, this event marked one of the first times in Canadian history when a "group of mostly poor men approached their government on the basis of moral entitlement, not charity" (1998: 22). Unlike poor, physically and mentally disabled Canadian civilians, Morton argues, veterans' circumstances were a direct result of "public policy" (1998: 23).

Leaders of the GWVA sought to establish themselves as advisors to parliamentary hearings on veterans' issues and urged policy makers to address their grievances. Among those issues they advocated for included the hiring of disabled veterans for government jobs, raising disability pensions for all ranks (commissioned and non-commissioned) to

the level of lieutenant, and securing better benefits for disabled veterans and veterans' widows (Morton 1998: 25). In 1921, GWVA leaders targeted the Pension Act with a barrage of complaints. Their efforts lead to its investigation by a royal commission, which began the following year (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 7). The investigating commission's findings "offered numerous recommendations designed to make the nation's system of disability pensions and veterans benefits more transparent, compassionate, and effective" (Neary 2004: 7). By 1925, however, the GWVA had fractured into numerous rival veterans groups representing different interests (Morton 1998: 27). Also in 1925, following several attempts, many of these fractured groups joined forces to form the Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League, now known as the Royal Canadian Legion (Morton 1998: 27; Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 6). Along with other veterans groups, The Legion would play an important role in helping the government of Canada prepare for the demobilization and re-establishment of World War II veterans (Morton 1998: 27; Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 10). The Legion also became a bit of a sore spot for Canadian veterans of peacekeeping missions of the 1990s, as will be discussed in Chapter Six.

3.2 Creating a veterans charter

Keshen links the cluster of legislation retroactively known as the Veterans Charter, created by the government of Canada to support the demobilization and re-establishment of Canadian World War II veterans, directly to GWVA veterans' dissatisfaction with their reintegration experiences following World War I (1998: 64). According to Keshen, Canadian veterans returned home to a climate of rising unemployment and federal

support efforts they found inadequate to meet their needs. Their consequent expressions of anger, he argues, were interpreted as “threatening” by “government authorities” (1998: 64). One example he cites was veteran involvement in the labour strikes in Winnipeg in 1919 (1998: 64). Determined to avoid the kind of “social turmoil” following WWII that took place following WWI, and also concerned to secure re-election, liberal government authorities began planning for post-war reintegration shortly after Canada entered the war in 1939 (1998: 65).

Also in 1939, heeding advice from former GWVA leaders, government authorities put together a special committee to manage the “demobilization and rehabilitation” of veterans once the war was over (Keshen 1998: 65). The committee consisted of officials from the ministries of Pensions and National Health, Public Works, National Defense, and Agriculture and Labour. The following year, when the General Advisory Committee on Demobilization and Rehabilitation was subsequently established to coordinate about 14 additional sub-committees, Robert England, a veteran, was appointed to manage it (1998: 65; Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 9). Keshen emphasizes the significance of veteran involvement in the planning:

This was a very different set-up from that after the Great War, when civilians and, worse still, patronage appointees, had often made decisions on matters such as military pensions, a policy that infuriated those returning from overseas (1998: 65).

Following the recommendations of the General Committee, in 1941, the government announced the Post-Discharge Re-establishment Order. The order made possible higher pensions and payouts in comparison to WWI and also guaranteed that veterans could return to their previous jobs upon return from the war. Moreover, if that

was impossible, it guaranteed veterans obtain a comparable job with the same employer. The Post-Discharge Re-establishment Order further established benefits related to education, job placement and setting up new businesses. Under the Order, for example, vocational training was available for veterans for an amount of time equal to time spent in uniform. Importantly, it also provided vocational training to all veterans, not only those disabled in the war. Free university for veterans was also provided under the Order. The Order established a preference for hiring veterans for civil service jobs and included further job placement measures. Additionally, The Order subsidized loans for starting a new business and in 1942 established The Veteran's Land Act, which aimed to help veterans acquire farms. Lastly, the Order granted veterans the right to claim unemployment insurance for up to a year (Keshen 1998: 66). According to Keshen, veterans' benefits in these areas continued to be improved upon through 1945 (1998: 66).

The cluster of legislation and activity known as the Veterans Charter also included the creation of the Department of Veteran Affairs and changes made to the Pension Act of 1919 (Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 10; Keshen 1998: 71). The Government of Canada created the Department of Veteran Affairs to help veterans transition back into civilian life by coordinating "policy with several government ministries" and executing "various programs for the soon to be repatriated" (Keshen 1998: 67). According to Keshen, Veteran Affairs trained its counsellors to help veterans understand the network of benefits available to them, and in 1944, more than half of its employees were themselves veterans (1998: 71). Changes to The Pension Act in 1939 and 1940 first extended Pension Act benefits to World War II veterans and then introduced a qualification distinguishing

service overseas from service at home (Neary 2004: 10). The Pension Act changes of 1940, argues Peter Neary, distinguished veterans according to either the “insurance principle” or the “compensation principle”:

Those serving outside the country were covered by the insurance principle, which provided coverage on a round-the-clock basis for disability or death incurred during military service, regardless of cause. By contrast, under the compensation principle, those serving inside Canada would be pensionable only for death or disability that could be directly linked to their military service (VAC 2004: 10).

Accordingly, Ives attributes a “hierarchy of esteem” to Veterans Charter legislation (1998: 88). The philosophy underlying the legislation, he argues, was meant to establish equity between benefits and service. He identifies three criteria used to determine such equity: “length of service, injury or non-injury, and service overseas or in Canada” (Ives 1998: 87). In turn, these criteria “stood for different levels of recognition of the degree to which service was valued” (1998: 87). According to this legislation, then, with the exception of veterans who had suffered injuries during the war, those veterans who had experienced contact situations with “the enemy” and those who had served overseas were deemed to have earned the highest value of entitlement to the benefits available under the Veterans Charter (1998: 87). The “debt” the government of Canada owed World War II veterans was, according to Ives, calculated according to the esteem policymakers attributed to their service (1998: 91).

In summary, then, the Veterans Charter, created following the Second World War, was at least in part designed to appease veteran distrust and anger left over from World War I. Veterans Charter benefits included legislation aimed at: reintegrating veterans into civilian society, compensating veterans for their service, providing veterans with life and

employment insurance, rehabilitating injured veterans and providing contingencies when rehabilitation was not possible, and, establishing a “hierarchy of esteem” which informed ideas about veterans’ earned eligibility for Veterans Charter benefits (Ives 1998: 86, 88). While I was doing my fieldwork, national conversation regarding the New Veteran’s Charter revolved around comparing government support of veterans injured on military operations between about 1939 and 2006, to government support of veterans medically released since April of 2006; the year in which Ottawa replaced the Pension Act system (designed to support injured WWII veterans) with the New Veterans Charter.

3.3 Updating the veterans charter

In 2010, the Chair of the Standing Committee on Veteran Affairs described the Canadian Forces and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act as constituting a “major reform” and redefinition of Canada’s system of compensation “for veterans in the event of injury, disability or death, in addition to providing a full range of services to assist veterans and their families” (Sweet 2010: 3). Civilians and veterans are more familiar with the Act’s alternative name: the New Veterans Charter (Lafontaine-Émond 2015: 1). This calls to mind comparison with the cluster of World War II era legislation that Keshen refers to as the “Veterans Charter,” including the changes to the Pension Act made in 1939 and 1940 (Keshen 1998: 64, Neary 2004: 10). The Government of Canada, however, has also referred to the Canadian Forces and Veterans Re-establishment and Compensation Act as the New Veterans Charter in its own publications, as did the veterans who participated in my research (Sweet 2010; Veterans Affairs Canada 2013; Lafontaine-Émond 2015). Consequently, in this thesis, I do the same.

The New Veterans Charter was designed to replace the former system of compensation and support for veterans with service-related injuries and disabilities, which had been governed by the World War II era Pension Act. It was supported by all parties in the House of Commons and passed “without amendment or debate” in April of 2006 (Lafontaine-Émond 2015: 1). Motivated to expedite the Act’s adoption, members of parliament agreed to skip several routine stages of the process to bring the New Veterans Charter into use as quickly as possible. Consequently, members of parliament presented the New Veterans Charter as a “living document,” meaning that it could, and should, be modified over time as changes became necessary (2015: 1).

Under the Pension Act system, military members who suffered from injuries sustained during service were eligible for a tax-free, monthly disability pension for life. The more severe a military member’s impairment, the greater the monthly pension. Should a member’s condition worsen, their pension could be adjusted upward; conversely, should the member’s condition improve their pension could be adjusted downward (Sweet 2010: 3). According to David Sweet, while the Department of National Defense and Veterans Affairs developed various programs for which injured veterans and their families might be additionally eligible, they were all informed by the same (Pension Act) philosophy; one that emphasized disability over rehabilitation (2010: 4). Veterans, Sweet suggests, were less likely to seek rehabilitation if doing so resulted in the lowering of their monthly pensions (2010: 4).

The philosophy behind the New Veterans Charter, argues Sweet, was to ameliorate this ‘deficiency’ by emphasizing its opposite (2010: 4). However, success of a

system that motivated (or coerced, depending on who I spoke to) veterans to seek rehabilitation was deemed impossible while “the principle of a monthly pension for life was maintained” (2010: 4). Consequently, where the Pension Act conflated the notion of benefits paid in recognition of pain and suffering with the notion of benefits paid to compensate for loss of income, the New Veterans Charter was designed to clearly distinguish non-economic support (recognition for pain and suffering) from economic support (income loss benefits) (Sweet 2010: 4; Veterans Ombudsman, Improving the NVC, the report 2013: 7). Veterans released before April of 2006 continued to receive their monthly disability pension while veterans medically released after April of 2006 fell under the New Veterans Charter system. The pre-New Veterans Charter tax-free, monthly disability pension for life was usually not available for them.

Sweet suggests there is additional reasoning behind the New Veterans Charter reforms. Drafted originally in reaction to the homecoming of hundreds of thousands of members of Canada’s Expeditionary Force (CEF) following World War I, he argues that the Pension Act was designed for a citizen army rather than a professional one:

The vast majority of veterans were ordinary citizens who had suspended their activities, ambitions and family lives to go and defend the values of freedom, knowing they would be risking their lives. Very few of them planned a “career” in the military. The Pension Act was therefore passed in 1919 to thank and compensate patriotic citizens whose futures had been dimmed by wartime injuries and the families of those who had sacrificed their lives (2010: 9).

Sweet argues that quite unlike the CEF, and since the mid 1950s, Canada has maintained professional armed forces in which members choose to enroll in anticipation of serving out potentially long military careers, rather than joining for the comparatively short-term duration of a massive global conflict like World War I or World War II. Following WWI

for example, what civilian soldiers of the CEF needed was for the government to help them return to their previous lives in Canada. Unlike the example of CEF veterans of WWI, professional soldiers who have been medically released from the military and thereby forced to retire from their careers, sometimes long before they had so planned, need support transitioning back into civilian society and into new careers where possible.

Sweet further argues that the Pension Act's inadequacies in the context of supporting medically released professional soldiers transition out of the military did not really become apparent until the 1990s. Until Canadian soldiers' participation in various violent peacekeeping operations in the Balkans and East Africa, he argues, very few soldiers retired due to physical and psychological injuries sustained on deployment. Mostly, veterans of this time period (mid 1950s to early 1990s) retired because they chose to rather than because the Department of National Defence deemed them no longer able to meet the Department of National Defence's universality of service requirements⁴ (2010: 10; Veterans Ombudsman report: improving the NVC 2013: 13). However, once Canadian soldiers became involved in the war in Afghanistan in 2002, the numbers of veterans facing medical release increased dramatically. According to Sweet, parliament reacted by attempting to render Canada's veterans benefits system more appropriate for helping professional soldiers transition back into civilian society (Sweet 2010: 10).

⁴ These are "deployment and fitness standards" which the Department of National Defence requires of all its active service members (Veterans Ombudsman Office's review: improving the NVC 2013:7). According to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, universality of service requirements further rendered benefits reform necessary because unlike contexts of civilian employment, which are protected under the Public Service Acts and other human rights legislation, service members who no longer meet universality of service requirements cannot be accommodated in other Canadian Forces jobs.

Some veterans suggested to me a more cynical motive underlying the philosophy of the New Veterans Charter changes to the former Pension Act system. Rather than being motivated by a philosophy of wellness, rehabilitation and transition, they suggested the New Veterans Charter is more realistically interpreted as the government's reaction to the estimated expense of paying a monthly pension for life to such a comparatively large number of medically released veterans. Following a brief description of five problematic aspects of the New Veterans Charter that received media attention when I was doing my fieldwork, along with some recommendations for their improvement made by veteran advocates and reported on to the parliamentary committee review of the New Veterans Charter by the Veterans Ombudsman Office, I will address relevant aspects of the issues to which the retired Canadian Forces members I spoke with attribute veteran cynicism and mistrust of the New Veterans Charter. Indeed, veterans' misgivings often informed much of the national conversation surrounding it. It is also worth noting here that the New Veterans Charter is a large and complex document and that very detailed analysis of its inadequacies and recommendations for improvement is beyond the scope of this historical background chapter. I have included those aspects that are relevant to my own conversations and observations.

According to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, economic conditions that must be met for a medically released service member's successful transition include: 1) ongoing physical rehabilitation 2) ongoing vocational rehabilitation along with financial incentives to participate therein, and 3) "guaranteed long-term financial security" (Sweet 2010: 5). Non-economic conditions include financial compensation of recognition of pain

and suffering and adequate family support (Sweet 2010: 5; Veterans Ombudsman actuarial analysis: improving the NVC 2013: 7). The provisions that make up the New Veterans Charter are meant to meet these economic and non-economic conditions thereby facilitating successful transition. In 2013, based on consultation with veterans advocate groups, Veterans Affairs Canada, and others, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman deemed several areas of provision to be most in need of immediate improvement, including: the Earnings Loss Benefit, provisions for veterans over sixty-five years of age, Veterans Affairs Canada's vocational rehabilitation programs and services, family support, and the Disability Award (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 12-31).

3.4 Economic benefits under the New Veterans Charter

As of 2015, the Earnings Loss Benefit (ELB) was available for medically released veterans who were also participating in rehabilitation and vocational services provided by Veterans Affairs Canada. Its purpose was to replace income lost while veterans focused “on their rehabilitation goals” (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 12). The ELB could be extended to the age of 65 for veterans deemed unable to work due to their disability.

Veterans advocates have argued that the amount of the ELB, which (as of 2015) was 75 percent of a veteran's pre-release salary and also taxable, was insufficient (Lafontaine-Édmond 2015: 7). They have further criticized the ELB as being particularly challenging for medically released service members with families who were also released at junior ranks, as their pre-release salaries were comparatively smaller whilst also

supporting dependents. Also, other allowances that medically released veterans might have been receiving prior to release were not generally calculated into the ELB, so the reduction in income following release was often greater “than assumed at first glance” (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 13). The office of the Veterans Ombudsman has also noted that the amount of the ELB—75 percent of veterans’ pre-release salary—had never been properly examined to determine if it was either sufficient or consistent with civilian income support programs. Further, the office of the Veterans Ombudsman has noted that the ELB was neither adjusted for inflation nor equal for reservists and regular forces members (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 12-14). Also, importantly, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman considered the loss of the ELB to negatively affect surviving spouses as certain benefits available to veterans over the age of 65 ceased following the veteran’s death, potentially leaving surviving spouses without enough income to support themselves.⁵

Recommendations for improving the ELB, according to the office of the Veterans Ombudsman, have included raising the ELB to 90 percent of veterans’ pre-release salary. The office of the Veterans Ombudsman also recommended eliminating inequity between former regular force members and former reservists and taking into account “income

⁵ In 2013, under the New Veterans Charter, some severely and permanently disabled veterans were entitled to the Permanent Impairment Allowance and the Permanent Impairment Supplement, in addition to the Supplementary Retirement Benefit. The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman reported inadequacies surrounding access to these provisions for veterans who have already been assessed as permanently disabled. It recommended improving access (Veterans Ombudsman report: improving the NVC 2013: 17; Lafontaine-Édmond 2015: 6).

growth that would have occurred as a result of promotions in a typical military career” (Lafontaine-Émonde 2015: 7). Veteran advocates have also suggested making the ELB non-taxable (2015: 7).

In 2013, Under the New Veterans Charter, a “totally and permanently incapacitated” veteran who was over the age of 65 and therefore no longer eligible for the ELB was entitled to the Supplementary Retirement Benefit (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 12). The purpose of this benefit, “a taxable lump sum based on two percent of the total amount of earning loss benefit,” was to compensate the veteran for their inability to contribute to a retirement pension plan as a consequence of their service-related injuries (2013: 12). Surviving spouses who were eligible could also receive this benefit. The Supplementary Retirement Benefit has mainly been criticized for being too small a sum and, as such, not sufficient to replace the ELB. Consequently, severely disabled veterans who were medically released in April of 2006 or later potentially faced severe financial risk once they reached 65 years of age (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 16). The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman’s report of various recommendations for improving provisions for severe and permanently disabled veterans over the age of 65 include, (among others): investing a sufficient percentage of the veteran’s ELB benefit before they reach age 65 and paying that percentage back once the veteran’s ELB ceases,⁶ increasing the Supplementary Retirement Benefit from two percent to ten percent of the of the ELB, and continuing the

⁶ In 2013, the ELB was not considered earned income and therefore could not be used to “contribute to the Canada Pension Plan or Registered Retirement Savings Plans” (Veterans Ombudsman’s Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 16).

ELB beyond age 65 at a reduced rate (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 24).

In 2006, the New Veterans Charter mandated Veterans Affairs Canada to provide vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services to medically released veterans and veterans who were not medically released but have demonstrated a “physical or mental health problem resulting primarily from service in the Canadian Forces that is creating a barrier to re-establishment to civilian life” (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 23-24). These services were available to eligible veterans based on need and for as long as eligible veterans had such need. Veterans Affairs Canada used contractors to help veterans with vocational rehabilitation and job placement. Veterans who were registered in these services, and who decided to participate in (approximately) two-year university programs or one to two-year college certifications or licensing programs, could receive Veterans Affairs Canada financial support towards tuition. Veterans Affairs Canada’s vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services were designed to build on veterans’ existing skills and experience (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 23-24).

Veteran advocates have nevertheless reported inadequacies with Veterans Affairs Canada’s vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman. They identify, for example, limitations placed by Veterans Affairs Canada on the type, length, and funding of vocational rehabilitation training. According to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, Veterans Affairs Canada did not permit training and education in new career fields where veterans’ military skills were

transferable and they had no medical limitations. Instead, Veterans Affairs Canada guided veterans “... into career fields they may no longer be interested in” and which did not pay as well as other fields requiring more post-secondary education than was funded; more specifically, funding did not support participation in a four year university degree at most Canadian universities (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 26; Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 5). Alternatively, the Veterans Ombudsman Office reported that, upon release, veterans sometimes found that their “military training and occupational skills” were not so easily transferable to “civilian academic equivalencies or to civilian jobs” (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 8). This was the case for several retired infantry soldiers I spoke with; William, for example, said the following when I asked about how his military training prepared him for a civilian job:

Karen: ...What you're doing now, do you feel that you're using any of the skills that you learned while you were in?

William: Well, I, I remember when I was out, out of the military I was out at a very young age. All I been trained in was how to shoot. Where you gonna get a job doin' that?

Veterans Affairs Canada's vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services also kept little follow-up data, making it difficult to measure the efficiency of the programs and services themselves so there was no way to determine the numbers of veterans who completed the programs and services and went on to find and keep jobs (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 26). Finally, veterans'

advocates deemed the system to be too confusing.⁷ Recommendations for improvement include building more flexibility into Veterans Affairs Canada's vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services, establishing funding capable of supporting the costs of more post-secondary education, and creating measures for determining the efficiency or rates of success of the programs and services. (Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 43-44).

3.5 Family support

The New Veterans Charter includes various economic and social provisions for the families of veterans who have sustained service-related disabilities or have died. These include a death benefit, an earnings loss benefit, a supplementary retirement benefit, and a Canadian Forces income supplement. Family members may also have access to health care (medical and psycho-social) and career services (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 28). The philosophy underlying such provisions, according to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, links family support to successful transition experiences:

⁷ When the New Veterans Charter began operating in 2006, a Department of National Defence vocational rehabilitation program already existed for medically released veterans as part of the Service Income Security Insurance Plan's (SISIP) Long Term Disability Plan. According to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman,

There are many programs available to help veterans transition from military to civilian life, with different eligibility and application requirements. That transition support for veterans is complex is unquestionable; when two different government agencies provide the same program to the same veteran, it does little to reduce complexity (Veterans Ombudsman's Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 27).

A veteran whose military career is terminated because of injury or illness and who must learn to cope with pain and impairment, a post-release reduction in income and reduced or inadequate family support is at risk of not being able to properly transition to civilian life. Quite often, the spouse or a family member serves as the primary caregiver for the injured or ill veteran, helping him or her with activities of daily living and providing encouragement. They too suffer emotionally, socially and economically. They can feel isolated and overwhelmed with the challenges of caring for the veteran and the entire family. Families of veterans coping with mental health problems face particular challenges (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 27).

Indeed, at a parliamentary hearing on veterans' affairs in Ottawa in 2013, I heard one riding community member describe spouses and family members as "first responders"; often becoming aware, before anyone else, when and how a veteran is struggling with the transition process (field notes November 2013).

Nevertheless, veterans advocates have pointed to a number of shortcomings. These include: insufficient financial assistance, insufficient provision of counselling for family members on dealing with the veteran's medical and mental health problems, insufficient counselling for family members in coping with the secondary stress involved in caring for and/or living with veterans struggling with medical and mental health problems, and insufficient counselling for mental health problems; particularly for the children and the parents of veterans. Veterans' advocates also recommended provision of respite for caregivers who often suffer from fatigue and burnout (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 29; Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013: 6).

In the example below, Wade illustrates some of these inadequacies in the context of family support. He also explains how the lived experience of transition is often more complicated than it appears in the Veterans Ombudsman Office's reviews and reports to

members of parliament (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013, Veterans Ombudsman Office report: improving the NVC 2013):

... The spouse is important. Nurturing, caring, understanding, sympathetic but that can only go so long before they get frustrated and they say they can't handle it. Resources for them are not as prevalent. And once again VAC will say, what do you need? The guy he says, I need some help for my wife. They go, well, okay we can do a little bit. Okay. But I asked my counsellor six months ago what have you got for my *[adult]* son? I'll get back to you. Well he hasn't got back to me. He's either forgotten about it or there is nothing. Things like that. You know so under the NVC the families, as I mention, I think have been really—despite the literature—have been really hard done by... VAC will tell you different. They'll say that we're providing job training and if the husband can't do it, the wife can. Well if the husband can't do it, then who's looking after the kids? If the wife is now doing vocational training...

In the exchange below Wade further illustrates the importance of providing family caregivers with relief:

Wade: ... Spousal support, spousal allowance. Recognition of the wife. Or husband. Children's allowance. Recognition of the children. You know, attendants' allowance. Recognition that there's certain things that you can't do because your husband or your wife can't do it. So you know it could be as simple as, I'm trying to think—uh, um someone taking me out to a movie because my wife wants to respite.

Karen: Your wife wants what, sorry?

Wade: Respite. A break. Uh so the attendants' allowance could be for that...

Veterans' advocates note that for the families of released Canadian Forces members, childcare is reduced compared with what the Military Family Resources Centres provide for the families of actively serving Canadian Forces members (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 29). According to Wade, mandating that the Military Family Resources Centre be made available to medically released veterans could ameliorate such inadequacies and potentially help provide respite

for spouses and family members as well. Again, Wade points out how the complications of the lived experience of seeking support can get lost in the literature that has been reviewed and reported on the New Veterans Charter:

Wade: ... You know if they funded, if VAC funded MFRCs then all of a sudden you can get daycare and babysitting services, you can get some entertainment, you know, with peers. Then a ton of stuff. But people have got to think outside the box. And they don't. So it's not cheap, it doesn't come for free. But VA/C/ says what do you need. Not here's—

Karen: What we can offer you

Wade: You know, Karen you just showed up today. I don't know you like a hole in the head. But I understand from your medical forms that you have PTSD. Here's what we can offer you to mitigate or to help manage this PTSD. We can send your husband off on some respite. We can send you away for a weekend just to get away from it all. Here's a psychiatrist that we know, that we know has some success. So go see your family doctor. Oh, you don't have a family doctor? Let's see if we can get you a family doctor. Or here's the walk-in clinic on 8th and 8th that we use... You know, that's how you—rather than saying hi, hi Karen, what do you need? Well I don't know what I don't know...

Raymond similarly noted that the Military Family Resources Centre was not mandated to support retired veterans:

Raymond: ... A veteran in Edmonton was having some psychological problems. His wife had phoned me. And it was during the day on a weekday. Called and tried to get help for her. You know some assistance. Her husband is locked up in jail because he confined her and their kids. And *[I]* tried to get her assistance. Because I wasn't too understanding of the program, I found out something interesting. MFRC has no responsibility to veterans living in Edmonton.

Karen: Doesn't make sense

Raymond: It's true. All MFRCs. This is their mandate. Their mandate is not for *[retired or released]* veterans. Their mandate is only military family support.

Karen: But the family support revolves—necessarily revolves around the veteran

Raymond: No. Doesn't have to. No they can remain dedicated to those in the military and the reserves. And the family. That was a shock to me. Because I thought they were still responsible for the veterans in their city. You know that they were still a support. That was a shock to me that that wasn't in their mandate...⁸

Correspondingly, as part of our conversation about family support, Wade told me "... the military don't care once you get out. Because they even cut you off from the MFRCs."

According to both Wade and Raymond, either extending the Military Family Resources Centre to retired veterans or somehow linking Veterans Affairs Canada with the Military Family Resources Centre, to form what Wade called a "Military and Veterans Family Resource Centre," would improve support for the family members of medically released Canadian Forces veterans. Veterans' advocates have also recommended that Veterans Affairs Canada provide better follow-up on what support the New Veterans Charter does provide to ensure that families' needs are being met and that Veterans Affairs Canada better communicate to veterans and their families that support for family members, if still flawed, is in fact available (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 29). Veterans Affairs Canada's communication of provisions available for medically released veterans and their families under the New Veterans Charter, or lack thereof, was a topic that came up repeatedly in my conversations with veterans about the New Veterans Charter—particularly regarding the Disability Award.

⁸ While Military Family Resources Centres are not mandated to extend access to retired and medically released Canadian Forces veterans, individual centers may choose to do so. "The Military Family Resources Centre here in Calgary," Wade told me, "does extend support to veterans. But they're not mandated to."

3.6 The ‘lump sum’ payment

In 2013, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman⁹ addressed family support as its own category. It did so, perhaps, to distinguish family support as a category separate from economic support—compensation for earnings lost—and non-economic support. Non-economic support, according to the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, includes support in the form of compensation in acknowledgement of pain and suffering. The Office of the Veterans Ombudsman accordingly states that a disability award was designed strictly as a non-economic benefit in provision of such acknowledgement. However, its categorization as such, according to some veterans, led to confusion regarding its purpose in relation to other economic provisions available under the New Veterans Charter.

This disability award, as defined by the Veterans Ombudsman Office,

... Recognizes and compensates Canadian Forces members, Veterans and, in prescribed cases, surviving spouses/common-law partners and surviving dependent children for non-economic impacts, such as pain and suffering, physical and psychological loss and the impact on their quality of life. The amount of the tax-free award depends on the severity of the disability and the relationship between the disability and service, and is paid as a lump-sum payment, annual payments or a combination of these two payment options. The maximum award payable is \$298,588 (2013 rates) (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: Improving the NVC 2013: 9).

In 2013, much media reporting and national conversation regarding veteran criticism of the New Veterans Charter revolved around comparison of this disability award (usually referred to simply as ‘the lump sum’) alone with the Pension Act (Sweet 2010: 46; Veterans Ombudsman Office actuarial analysis: improving the NVC 2013: 4-10). Wade,

⁹ In 2013, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman published a document for Parliament entitled, *Improving the New Veterans Charter*. The document was published in several parts. I have cited three of them. These include: *The Actuarial Analysis*, *The Report*, and *The Review*.

an accomplished and well-known activist for veterans with disabilities, explains below that this comparison, and some of the veteran criticism of the lump sum that was making the news in 2013, was informed by basic misunderstanding of its purpose:

It's a touchstone. It is a major point of contention. This disability award. Uh this lump sum award... A lump sum is recognition of pain and suffering. Period. It's not an income replacement. It's just Canada saying sorry you're hurt and if you're really hurt you get a bigger lump sum. If you're not really hurt you get a lower lump sum. But a lot of people say that's my income. Well, no...

Designed as a non-economic benefit, the lump sum was never intended to provide income replacement. The Veterans Ombudsman Office has similarly argued that "... benefits for meeting economic needs should not be compared to benefits provided for pain and suffering," and that comparison of the lump sum disability award alone to the lifetime disability pension that was previously awarded monthly under the Pension Act ignores the suite of economic benefits additionally available under the New Veterans Charter (Veterans Ombudsman Office actuarial analysis: improving the NVC 2013: 4). Examples include the Earnings Loss Benefit, provisions for veterans over 65, and the vocational rehabilitation and assistance programs and services briefly addressed above. Sweet further suggests, and pointedly, that if the economic benefits available under the New Veterans Charter had provided adequate financial security perhaps some veterans would stop considering the lump sum to be income replacement (2010: 46).

According to Wade, beyond its intended function as recognition for pain and suffering rather than income replacement, some veteran criticism of the lump sum also confused whom the award was meant to benefit:

But you realize that um everyone [*who compares the lump sum to the Pension Act*] probably doesn't even qualify for the lump sum. Because — well, some do. I

shouldn't generalize. But to get 100% lump sum... to qualify for that, chances are you're not gonna be going to Vegas. You'll be multiple limb loss, paralyzed, blind, horribly burnt, quadriplegic, paraplegic. You know, you'll be one of those guys to qualify for that highest level of compensation...

Wade's comments bring up another point of contention that I encountered in my conversations with veterans about the New Veterans Charter. Below, Gavin expresses what I have come to think about as the 'one veteran, one standard' perspective:¹⁰

Gavin: ... My opinion has always been that a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. We signed up to die, if necessary, for whatever the responsibility was. If we didn't die and came home in pretty good shape or healthy, that wasn't our fault. Right? So a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. So that's why... veterans are their own worst enemies. We can't even agree on what a veteran is... So there's basically five cultures: the Afghan, the Gulf War, the Peacekeepers and the Cold War veterans, World War II and Korea. And not every one of those groups believes that the other group is a veteran.

Karen: Right

Gavin: In fact, there's even a distinction in our Veterans Affairs.

Karen: Really?

Gavin: Yes. And that's terrible.

Karen: Yeah?

Gavin: Our government and our Veterans Affairs department should be ensuring, should be insisting that a veteran is a veteran is a veteran. But even the categories of benefits are different, are broken up... So that's terrible.

Gavin is a veteran who served in the early days of the Cold War. When I met him he was very concerned for the healthy and successful transition of young veterans of the war in Afghanistan and considered himself a veterans' advocate. While I did not come across

¹⁰A well-know online veterans group, Canadian Veterans Advocacy, uses this phrase as its slogan (www.canadianveteransadvocacy.com).

Gavin's exact categories of how veterans distinguish among each other in my own conversations with other veterans (or in my reviews of the Veterans Ombudsman Office's documents for parliament), his suggestion that some veterans value participation in dangerous conflicts over participation in less dangerous ones is a position I encountered more than once. I explore this concept in further detail in Chapter Four, as part of my discussion of the riding community membership. Relevant to this discussion of the lump sum payment, I interpret Gavin's comments to mean that from his perspective, all injured veterans should be in receipt of the same benefits regardless of when they served or the conflicts in which they did or did not participate. Gavin's comments, if implicitly, compare the Pension Act system to the NVC; and suggest the NVC does not measure up:

...Like I said, I'm not going to give up, I'm going to keep fighting because I think that—I think our Afghan veterans in particular, the wounded from Afghanistan, we've got to look after those guys. We've got to go a better job of it. And we're not. We're not doing as good a job as we should be.

In his comments below, Wade also compares the old system with the New Veterans Charter. Unlike the 'one veteran, one standard' perspective however, Wade suggests that the New Veterans Charter, in particular the lump sum payment, was meant to take a more scaled approach to service related injuries:

... So the issue that the young guys are having is that financial responsibility for the government to [*provide financial security*] for the seriously injured—I can't speak about all the guys—but the seriously [*injured*], is not there. Hopefully it will come. And I keep telling people that the last reforms to the Pension Act took 40 years to implement. All the reforms, once they introduced them. This new plan, its only seven years into it. You know, so. And in the seven years they've already changed a few things. And there's a lot of traction now moving forward to uh to bringing on more, layering on more financial support for those that need it. Under the old plan if you had loss of hearing, you got everything. Well I'm sorry, loss of hearing—it's an inconvenience but it's not the end of the world. It's not like the loss of a leg or an arm or an eye. There's a difference in scales...

From Wade's perspective, then, not all veterans have the same degree of need. Moreover, the energy some veterans had spent making 'one veteran, one standard' arguments could have been more effectively spent arguing for the improvement of existing economic provisions:

VAC's mentality, when they made these changes, were that not all people need the support, what they really need is a new means of generating income... A new job, some training to get them into a, you know, to do that transition. Whereas in the old plan they just gave you money... Safe to say that my bet is that a lot of the soldiers will complain about the lump sum not necessarily realizing what it's for. What they should actually be focused on is getting earnings loss programs up to 100 percent coverage and bringing in spousal, children and attendants allowances tax-free to support the families... That's where people should be focused. Not on the pain and suffering award. Uh which is very similar to what the courts award. Um it's a bit shy. But it's very similar... What a lot of people would like would be low-income loans to start businesses. Or no interest loans like a grant. Or zero interest, seed money to start businesses. There's many ways to skin a cat. But that's where, I've said it before, a lot of these guys should be focusing their energy. Not on the lump sum.

Improving the New Veterans Charter, for veteran advocates like Wade, would require that funding for family support be increased and that the recommended improvements to economic provisions discussed throughout this sub-section be made, and particularly, for the very seriously injured. Other veterans suggest that by endeavouring to help veterans sift through the complexity of the New Veterans Charter, Veterans Affairs Canada could improve its relationship with many of them.

3.7 'Delay, deny, and hope they die'

The New Veterans Charter, from the perspective of the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, was designed to correct the "legislative approach" of the Pension Act, which unintentionally encouraged veterans to focus on their service-related disabilities rather than their transition into civilian society (Veterans Ombudsman Office review:

improving the NVC 2013: 4). Replacing it, the New Veterans Charter was designed to better meet veterans' "transition needs" by promoting "wellness, positive outcomes and incentives for successful transition" (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 4). As I have discussed above, veterans advocates have identified numerous shortcomings and have recommended improvements that would make the New Veterans Charter more effective. Beyond improving economic and non-economic benefits laid out in the New Veterans Charter and administered by Veterans Affairs Canada, however, some of the retired Canadian Forces members I spoke with suggested that the New Veterans Charter's effectiveness was further inhibited by veterans' underlying mistrust of both "Ottawa's" motivations for bringing it into existence and its facilitators at Veterans Affairs Canada. The heading of this subsection cites comments made by veteran advocate Sean Bruyea, which appeared in an article written by Bea Vongdouangchanh in June 2014:

... Have veterans' programs improved? Sadly, the opposite has occurred. Government has circled the wagons, and avoided making any substantial improvements to the New Veterans Charter in the eight years of its existence... A culture of delay, deny and hope they die is alive and well at Veterans Affairs and Treasury Board (www.hilltimes.com).

In 2013, the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman similarly, if less compellingly, acknowledged that while the New Veterans Charter was intended to be a 'living charter' which could and should be amended as needed, in the seven years since it had been activated it had been updated only once (Veterans Ombudsman Office review: improving the NVC 2013: 4).

Traces of Bruyea's accounting of Ottawa's administration of the New Veterans Charter as strategies of delay and denial appeared in my own conversations with veterans.

As I mentioned earlier, some veterans suggested that a more realistic interpretation of the New Veterans Charter is as a move by parliament to avoid paying life-long pensions to the comparatively large number of veterans that were being medically released since Canada began its operations in Afghanistan. In the following, Warren and Audrey accordingly suggest that veterans who live too long become expensive for the government:

Warren: See but they came home from WWI at 24, 25 [*years of age*]. They come home from WWII at 26, 27. They come home from Vietnam at 20, 21. Like, they've always come home young. They just get old the longer they live, right? The problem with vets is they get old. Okay? The problem—everybody's whining about clawbacks and pensions and stuff. Well we're all livin' older. What do you think drove GM to bankruptcy?

Audrey: The pensions.

The 'delay' interpretation, at its most cynical, suggests that by making the Pension Act unavailable to veterans released after 2006 whilst also dragging its feet on making New Veterans Charter improvements which largely recommended providing more financial support for medically-released veterans and their families, the government saved money by simply waiting for the Pension Act veterans to die. Reflecting on the Lump Sum, Greg also suggests that the government of Canada saw veteran Pension Act recipients as burdensome:

Greg: ...Especially the guys that lost limbs and stuff like that. But even them, you're [*the government*] kind of like, go away. You know I'll put you in harm's way and if you don't get hurt it's fine but if you get hurt—well you know it's like when they said that they give all these people this money. You're gonna give a 20 year old \$150,000.

Karen: Lump Sum

Greg: Yeah. So I mean, I'm gonna go buy a truck or a car. But when the money runs out who's gonna take care of you. Well, we gave you the money; you're supposed to take care of yourself. Like, that's not how it works. You put me in harm's way. You gotta take care of me. But that's not the way it works. So that's why when you're with your friends and you're out there you're really on guard for yourself and for your friends to help them. But uh you can't, you cannot depend on the government in a sense because it all boils down to dollars and cents. And that's all you are to them. You know it's the same thing as when you get old. I mean you're not a—they don't look and say, you know what? You served your country or you worked all these years, here. You paid your taxes. You know... we're gonna help you out to live out your last few years. They're gonna say Christ I wish this sucker would die. That's the way they're looking at ya.

Greg's comments bring up another aspect of many injured and disabled veterans' complicated relationships with Veterans Affairs Canada: their expectation of being denied the support they believe they need. Below, Wade describes this expectation of denial. I had asked him why he thought the many transition services and programs available to medically released veterans under the New Veterans Charter seemed to be underused:

I don't think the VAC is trusted. As much as they would like to feel that they are, there's a level of trust... You know VAC, if you have a need, chances are they're gonna lowball you on anything. You feel you should be at 50% disabled; they'll come in at 10%. So the soldiers think they're being short-changed. That they're not fielding the amount of money that they should be. But once again, they're following a benefit table grid and they try to figure out where the guy fits in. It may not be where they wanna see themselves fitting in and chances are that VAC has low-balled them and they have to go back and appeal. So, there's appeal after appeal after appeal trying to get some level of compensation that's worth something. So, VAC is seen as the enemy, they're not trusted.¹¹

Retired from the Canadian Forces well before activation of the New Veterans Charter, Greg's comments below suggest that expectation of denial, and carrying the burden of

¹¹ The processes of repeated appeals itself can be traumatizing to veterans already living with operational stress injuries. I address the process of secondary wounding in more detail in Chapter Six.

proof for one's own support, is not solely a side effect of the new system; rather, it has been frustrating veterans for much longer:

Greg: You know, you can get mad at the guy but you can't. He's got a job to do. And his job is to save the government money and screw you.

Karen: Okay

Greg: So you're gonna lose. Unless it's something—like even, even something simple like hearing aids. Four tests I had to have to get my hearing aids. Four! Civvie goes in, he gets one. He buys his hearing aids. I do four. And then they're saying, oh well, oh. Maybe you'll be good for another three or four years before you really need them. Really?! I can't hear you now.

Another source of frustration (and mistrust) for some veterans in their dealings with Veterans Affairs Canada is related to an understanding gap between those seeking support and those empowered with the authority to grant or deny it. One solution suggested to me was to put veterans rather than civilians in these positions of arbitration, or as Wade told me, “the fix will be in play if VAC's frontline staff were all ex-military.” Below, Greg aptly explains what it might be like for a veteran to experience this understanding gap:

Greg: It's when you go out in front of these people and you're trying to explain to somebody a problem you've got. It's like me... I got H4.¹² So my hearing is not good. I'm watching your lips more than I'm listening.

Karen: Yeah?

Greg: ... I have hearing aids but guy's saying, “well you seem to be hearing me well.” I said, “no, I'm watching you talk. And I can't hear what you're saying but I'm concentrating.” And then *[Gregg says to the Veterans Affairs Canada staff*

¹² According to Appendix 3, Annex A of the Department of National Defence's Table of Hearing Standards, a designation of H4 means, “the (Canadian Forces) member has the necessary auditory acuity to only hear sounds greater than 50 dB in either ear in the 500 to 3000 Hz frequency range” (2018: www.forces.gc.ca).

member], “how’s your hearing?” “Well I’ve never had a problem.” “Do you fire guns?” “Oh no. I don’t like guns.” “Do you, you know, do you go into loud music where it’s—” “no I don’t like that.” Well. So you have no idea what I’m talking about when I say a hearing problem. You don’t understand when you—say that you’re walking between two frikkin’ guns when they fire and it throws you back a 100 frikkin’ yards in mid air like a cartoon. And you can’t, your ears ring for two or three weeks. You have no idea what I’m talking about. “Well no, but it says right here that you know that sometimes you get loss and sometimes—it says here, it says that.” What the hell does that mean to me? I’m listening to it. I’m listening to the ringing all the time. You know? Or have you ever been shot? “Well no.” I said: “well you know these aren’t golf holes,” you know? ... You can tell me anything you want. If you walked in the shoes, I’ll listen to you. But you’ve never been near the shoes? Yeah, I’m not listening to you.

Greg further demonstrates, hypothetically, how understanding gaps can potentially negatively affect treatment regimes when veterans must discuss private and sometimes sensitive medical problems with civilian staff members:

You’re trying to talk to people um about a problem you got. Which is very hard to talk to you about. Um they’ll send me to talk to you, say I want to talk to you about a sexual problem. Like I can’t get it up anymore for my wife. How many guys are gonna walk into a woman and say that? They’re just gonna look at them and say, well I’m having this little problem and you know and well. You’re trying to, trying to tell, but you’re tryin’ to tell a woman and you’re goin’, holy crap. You know. Or they turn around and say because I’m uncomfortable talking with—I want to talk to a guy. And then you get in, and the guy and you’re trying to tell this guy that. And you’re trying to talk to a guy that’s in his thirties, right? Um. Married, great sex life. And you’re trying to explain to him that because of what happened or the pills you’re on or whatever, you just can’t do certain things...

Most of the veterans I spoke with agreed that putting more veterans on staff at Veterans Affairs Canada would make encounters between veterans seeking support for their medical service-related conditions and Veterans Affairs Canada frontline staff members more effective, and thereby help to establish relationships of greater trust. While Wade thought so too, he also points out that replacing frontline staff with veterans was not as easy as it sounds:

People in VAC are public sector, you know public works... They're public employees... They're unionized and all that stuff. So they're working their way up from when they started off as the copy machine person. Got themselves a degree in sociology and became a social worker. Now they're a frontline staff. You know if I was uh, if I went back to school and became a social worker I could also apply to work at VAC. You know and be one guy. But they're not gonna parachute in a tonne of people when there's already a system in place.

If parliament were to implement improvements suggested for improving the New Veterans Charter which recommend, for example, greater flexibility for medically released veterans interested in pursuing new career paths, or, provision of adequate tuition for veterans interested in participating in four year university programs, perhaps, over time, frontline staff at Veterans Affairs Canada could include more veterans helping veterans in the way that Greg and Wade believe would make a difference.

Veterans nevertheless suggested some more immediate ways to bridge the understanding gap. Supporting recommendations cited in the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman's report and review for improving the New Veterans Charter, veterans I spoke with wanted to see Veterans Affairs Canada put more energy into outreach. Raymond, as an example, has suggested that Veterans Affairs Canada run a conference in Ottawa for veterans:

The first day is an education day. That's when you will learn about the new system. The NVC. You will have a full day of education. You know, with breaks, but a full day of education. So you can learn about the benefits of the NVC. What it provides... Compare it! To the Pension Act. You know, show the differences. Show the differences between the old Pension Act and the NVC. Show the differences. At the end of the day... Because the NVC is a complete program. It doesn't just give you a lump sum and say goodbye. It doesn't just give you a monthly pension and say goodbye. It's got a whole host of opportunities...

In our conversation, Raymond re-iterated to me the complexity of the document (the New Veterans Charter) and emphasized his belief that, beyond imminently improving the

economic and non-economic provisions that make up the new benefit system itself, miscommunication of the New Veterans Charter to veterans continued to play a role in limiting its potential effectiveness:

How can you understand something that's never been explained to you? Called the NVC... You know I keep saying, dumb it down so they can understand. Speak their language. You know everything for Quebec is translated. From English to French. Everything. Two billion dollars a year in translation. Dumb it down so they can understand...

Wade also emphasized the importance of communication and continuity to the process of meeting veterans' transition needs in the context of Veterans Affairs Canada:

VAC is seen as the enemy, they're not trusted. So this transition, as you're leaving something you're very comfortable with. You going from driving an automatic little Camry, to the—or the standard little Camry to the automatic F-150 Duly... Okay I'm not really comfortable with this. I'd rather have my little car. These guys would rather have what they're comfortable with. Um and I think that's common nature, I think that's across the board. That's no different. You know the military, it's a subset of society. Probably no different than fire, police or EMTs. It's probably no different than Coast Guard. Their organization is tight and then when you leave you have challenges. How to bridge that it's uh—you need people on the outside that speak the language. VAC needs to, they need to promote one counsellor in each district can speak to you and do outreach and speak to these guys one-on-one in their own language. Listen to them. The problem is that VAC never gives the answers these guys want to hear...

The mental health and well-being of Canadian Forces members who served in Afghanistan was the other veteran-related topic of interest garnering media attention while I was doing my fieldwork. This was due, at least in part, to four soldier suicides occurring within a period of nine days in late 2013. Various news reports at the time suggested a connection between soldiers committing suicide after returning to Canada following deployment to Afghanistan and the Department of National Defence's

universality of service principle¹³ which requires active Canadian Forces members “to be physically fit, employable and deployable for general operational duties” (2017a: www.forces.gc.ca). I did not encounter veterans specifically making this connection in the course of my own conversations and observations. Various veterans did, however, indicate a relationship between medical release and their feelings of betrayal by and mistrust of the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. Below, for example, Wade describes his sense of abandonment by the Department of National Defence when he was medically released as a result of the injuries he sustained on operations in the Balkans in the 1990s. He maintains that many veterans, particularly junior non-commissioned members, deal with similar feelings regarding their medical release and their relationship with Veterans Affairs Canada:

I’m coming at it at a much different level. Um as a manager... you know with many years experience, who was jilted also. You know, I mean I don’t think they should have thrown me out of the military. You know they spent millions working from here up on me. And then they threw me out... I don’t think the young guys are viewing this as a helpful situation. A lot of them are being forced out of a job that they love. Because they have been playing GI Joe and cowboys since the age of three. This is all they know, this is all they want to do. And now because something has happened, that they didn’t do to themselves that someone did to them, they have no idea where to turn or to refocus that energy or that direction so they focus it in anger.

Sweet similarly warns that medical release may be interpreted by service members as punishment for getting hurt (2010: 10). Even the Veterans Ombudsman Office’s review of the New Veterans Charter argued that fear of medical release often negatively

¹³ See for example: Campion-Smith (2014), The Current (2014), D’Aliesio (2015a: www.theglobeandmail.com; 2015b: www.theglobeandmail.com).

affected help seeking among soldiers with physical and operational stress injuries (2013: 8). Beyond being particularly in need of the support and sense of belonging that, for many, only their unit members can offer them, many Canadian Forces members with physical and psychological injuries also preferred to hold on to the financial security and benefits they (and their families) had depended on throughout their military careers. Consequently, rather than preparing¹⁴ for medical release and transition, many injured veterans have tried to stay in the Canadian Forces as long as possible (2013: 8). Wade offers one poignant, if extreme, example of an injured Canadian Forces member going to great effort to avoid medical release:

Wade: I know a guy that lost his leg. And, in Bosnia, and um—but he was lost in the system. The system didn't even know he had lost his leg.

Karen: I don't know how that's possible

Wade: And so he faked it. He saw civilian doctors, he saw civilian prosthetists and all that and when he had to go to medicals he, you know, sit behind the desk and everything. And it wasn't until he got stuck out in the field and his leg was off and he couldn't get back to the truck that—when did this happen?! Oh, like five years ago man, didn't you know? But he wasn't telling anybody. And unfortunately, as soon as he did he was gone. Turfed out of the military, you're not fit. He's, I passed all the tests you didn't even know I was an amp. You know because you guys screwed me around. You know. So I mean there's horror stories like that all over the place. I know guys who the wives lock them in the basements at night. Because they'll walk at night and they'll kill anything they get their hands on so they lock them up at night. And let them out in the morning. And then they go to work because they're afraid to tell anybody because they'll be out of a job. What's the common denominator? Financial security. Right back to dollars and cents. That's what it boils down to.

¹⁴ According to the Office of the Veteran Ombudsman, depending on their specific medical employment limitations, Canadian Forces members who have received a medical release decision from the Department of National Defence have between six months and three years before their actual release date (2018: ombudsman-veterans.gc.ca).

Wade indicates that categories of operational stress injuries such as post-traumatic stress disorder potentially put a Canadian Forces member in violation of the universality of service principle. In addition to their anxiety about getting medically released, serving members might avoid disclosing an operational stress injury sustained whilst serving, or avoid seeking treatment for psychological injuries in the first place, for fear of other ways that doing so might affect them and their families. Disclosing psychological injuries may negatively affect a soldiers' career advancement, for example. I asked Richard, who at the time of our interview was a recently retired Canadian Forces infantry Officer, about the kind of support available for serving members and their families. He too suggested that the idea of disclosing a psychological injury could, potentially, be worrisome for a serving soldier:

Richard: ... I think a lot of troops still, well not a lot of troops, still might be a bit anxious about approaching um the system. Um, which—I mean it's a natural uh, I mean it's a natural anxiety. Um this is one of the reasons the MFRCs [*Military Family and Resource Centres*] are uh staffed completely by civilians. There's not normally anybody in uniform there. And um and also some folks will, will not go to military agencies they will go and seek help off the base um because they don't want to, they don't want to self-identify as having a problem because they're still not 100% sure how they're going to be treated.

Karen: ... Is there stigma attached, to having that on your record?

Richard: Uh what in particular?

Karen: Well, let's say... you've got, say an NCM [*non-commissioned member*] who has been diagnosed with some kind of OSI. Um would he or she be hesitant to get help for the OSI? Or if he or she thinks they are suffering from one, worry about having that on the record in terms of career development?

Richard: Some of them might be. Um it's a lot better than it was, we've had some very high-profile people um you know quite clearly state that uh they've suffered from it themselves. But you know it really—it's because how each person develops OSI and how each person deals with it—it's a very, very individual thing

um I would say, how they see the system helping them or not. But yes I would say that most guys probably are reluctant to think that on their medical files it will say treated for um post-traumatic stress disorder or whatever. They're, they're probably concerned about it.

Wade and Richard each offer insights connecting military release and the damaging effects it can have on an injured Canadian Forces member's sense of ontological security. One example includes a lack of trust in the Department of National Defence as caretaker, which in turn, may cause distrust in a predictable environment capable of answering the existential questions. Additionally, their anxiety about the potential of military release may negatively affect hope in future possibilities (the capacity to transform given potentialities into "the means to some kind of end worth living for")¹⁵ (Giddens 1991, Jackson 2008: vx). As I mention above, most of the veterans I spoke with did not directly attribute the soldier suicides that took place in late 2013 to medical release in the context of the universality of service principle, as did various news reports at that time. Raymond, however, suggested a link between medical release and the potentially wounding effects of involuntarily facing transition into civilian society. In his comments below, in relation to Giddens and Jackson, Raymond talks about hope in the context of the New Veterans Charter. He suggests that the New Veterans Charter's failure to offer hope (financial security) in the transition process, which he attributes to Veterans Affairs Canada's poor communication of the New Veterans Charter to veterans, left some injured soldiers with the sense that their families would be better off without them:

VAC doesn't know how to sell hope. You know why are people committing

¹⁵ See Chapter One, subsection 1.4.2 'Existentiality in place' for discussion of Giddens's concept of ontological security and Jackson's concept of hope in future possibility.

suicide? They have no hope. It's so simple. You know the solution to the problem is so simple. You know like all you have to do is give hope... Why does a person leave his family behind? ... I mean here I am, I'm broken. And I don't feel good about myself and I'm getting 75% of my income only. My wife has to quit her job to take care of me... You know like they were in the service. They would step on that land mine to save their buddy. So what's the difference? I kill myself, I'm stepping on that land mine to save my family. To make my family more comfortable. All I am is, I'm not worth anything anymore anyways, I'm broken... How come nobody's looking at this? Like you know. Guys, they aren't dying because they can't get care, they're dying because they can't provide for their family anymore. They feel like they're not whole anymore. Everybody has to take care of them now... So yeah, VAC and National Defence do not know how to sell hope. You wanna stop the suicides? Sell hope. It's as simple as that...

Raymond's comments identify some of the ways in which a veteran's medical release, due to serious physical and/or psychological service-related injuries, potentially creates significant stress for immediate family members. This is particularly so for those members with whom veterans live. Although the mental health and well-being of family members living with veterans who were struggling with physical and psychological injuries was not widely covered in the news when I was doing my fieldwork, the veterans I spoke with almost always made it a point to tell me the stress related to service-related injuries and medical release also affected the families. It is therefore relevant to a discussion about the mental health and well-being of medically-released veterans to address secondary traumatization among the family members.

Charles Figley, discussing the effects of stress on the families of American Gulf War veterans, describes secondary traumatization as experienced by "those who come in contact with a traumatized person, such as a husband or mother" (1993: 59). Family members who experience secondary traumatization, Figley argues, "may experience considerable emotional upset and may, over time, become indirect 'victims' of the

traumatic event” (1993: 59). Aphrodite Matsakis, who has written about secondary traumatization in children, argues that in addition to becoming ‘victims’ themselves of their parent’s service-related trauma, children may mimic their traumatized parent’s hyper-vigilance, hyper-arousal or reliving experiences:

In secondary traumatization, the child, in some manner, relives the father’s¹⁶ traumatic war experiences or becomes obsessed with the war-related issues that trouble the veteran. The child may even manifest symptoms similar to the veteran’s. The child may have nightmares about war or worry a great deal about death and injury (2007: 323).

Accordingly, in their discussion about secondary traumatization in adult children of Israeli combat veterans, Yula Dinshtein, Rachel Dekel and Miki Polliack cite a variety of clinical reports attributing “learning difficulties, hostility,” feelings of guilt, “social problems,” “difficulty coping with stress and regulating emotions,” and “higher levels of behavioural problems” and “emotional difficulties” in children of veterans who struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder as compared to children of veterans who do not struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder (2011: 110). I encountered echoes of this in my own conversations. While Wade did not explicitly refer to his children’s experiences as secondary traumatization, his comments reflect some of the descriptions above. In Wade’s comments below, I have used in italics the gender-neutral pronoun ‘they’ for anonymity:

¹⁶ Matsakis identifies the veteran as male in this passage. Many of the veterans I spoke with, who also self-identify as struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, are former infantry soldiers. While infantry is a trade still populated by more men than women, it is important to note that many women veterans likewise struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, whether they are former infantry soldiers or formerly belonged to other military trades.

My youngest feels guilty because *they don't* remember me being hurt. *They were* only three years old. The oldest won't have anything to do with the military because the military hurt me. And the little *one* for some reason thought it was *their* fault. I don't know why. I mean you don't know how kids' minds work. Even today, now. I mean you have huge anger issues. Uh *they have* probably got post-traumatic stress disorder. You know as a result of me, of my injuries. And perhaps my behaviour before I got help... You know that sort of stuff... You know so very serious, serious issues...

Dinshtein, Dekel and Polliack cite additional research maintaining that spouses of veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder experience “symptoms of depression, anxiety, somatization, fatigue, difficulties to concentrate, sleep disorders, and headaches” as well as “increased social isolation” (2011: 110). Matsakis situates some of these symptoms in the context of parenting. Combat trauma, she argues, interferes with a veteran's capacity to parent (2007: 300). Consequently, “their partners may feel like single parents with the burden of their children's emotional and physical well-being on their shoulders alone” (Matsakis 2007: 342). In her comments below, Willa, the spouse of a medically released veteran, was responding to my question about the connections between the benefits claims process with Veterans Affairs Canada and the family's mental health and wellbeing. Her comments provide additional context regarding the ways in which the processes of transition, specifically in the context of medical release, can interfere with parenting:

... These guys are already dealing with enough physical—and then you're putting them through mental stuff on top of it? And then that's gonna affect the family. Because they're frustrated, right? Who lives with them 24 hours a day? Or, well, 18 hours... like who's there with them? It's the family. So when they're frustrated—I don't care who—you could be the best dad or the best husband in the world. There are gonna be times when you're just gonna be so PO'd that you take it out on your family. And that's just so not fair. So does it affect them? Absolutely... But when we go back to what it was like for [*Willa's husband*]. Uh, the frustration. He never took it out on me but he certainly—with the kids he had a

very short fuse with them. You know, we were lucky we have a relationship where I can point out and say hmmm... You're not doin' so well. And he did go and seek help which was terrific. And it helped tremendously.

According to Matsakis, operational stress injuries also make it difficult for veterans to be near their children. This is because the pressure of parenting has perhaps become overwhelming on top of the ongoing struggle with post-traumatic stress disorder, or, because they experienced “painful combat experiences with children” during their deployment (Matsakis 2007: 342). Ian, a veteran of Canada's operations in the Balkans in the 1990s, and his wife Amber, provide an example of how combat trauma can interfere with parenting in this way. The exchange below is part of our conversation about what taking a vacation with the family was like, during or following a tour of duty (I have used the pronoun ‘they’ to keep the child's name and gender anonymous):

Karen: So what was the vacation like?

Ian: Well I couldn't walk on grass. Um because that's one of the, you know, big things you look for is where's the minefield? You're so totally focused on stuff like that. So I mean... [*names their child*] would run across the grass, I couldn't chase after *them*. I, it just, like someone put a wall up in front of me and stuff like that, right?

Amber: That took months

Ian: Yeah

Amber: Months that, to get more comfortable. He couldn't tolerate being around the kids when they were crying or anything like that. That really was disturbing for him. So he usually had to leave. Um you know.

Ian: Yeah, crying kids. They had, they used to sit right outside my shack. Like my sleeping quarters was here, the fence was here, the kids would sit on that side of the fence and there was nothing we could do and they'd cry 24 a day. So anytime you tried to go to sleep they were still there crying. And after six and a half, seven months of that, you—kinda going, can't you shut—like it just, it kinda grates on

ya and then the fact that you can see them and they're you know, yeah, they're missing limbs and they're—

Amber: Starving

Ian: Starving and they're not dressed for the weather and you're going, God this is retarded. Right? And then there's nothing you could do. I mean we had—

Amber: Well there was, you guys had an incident where you helped one and then they, they harmed the other child.

Ian: Mmm

Amber: Right? So like the troops, like let's say if you helped a Croat child um and a Serb or Muslim see that then they would hurt you know um one of the Croat children in retaliation. Right? Because you didn't help a Serb or a Muslim.

Ian: ... Just psychotic. Yeah... They were driving us batty. They were. Uh and it was 24 hours a day. They wouldn't go away because they figured we were there to help, right? And then [*the soldiers*], can't. So. That kinda grates on ya after a while...

Greg, who had difficult experiences with children on operations as well, similarly talked about how such experiences sometimes interfered with his role as a parent once he had returned home:

...The body is used to being home with the family and then body's not, and then the body wants to be by itself. You know it takes a while to get used to it again. You get used to the kids coming up to you and you know wanting to hold your hand and you keep moving it away. Like that was bad for me when on a couple of tours kids would—[*says children's names*] would come up and grab my hand I just pull my hand away. You don't want to hold our hand daddy? And I'm going, oh okay. I'd actually have to remember I had to hold it. I'm, you're not gonna hurt me and I'm not gonna hurt you and oh it takes a while...

Unlike Ian and Greg, Richard does not describe traumatizing experiences with children whilst on operations that enduringly interrupted his interactions with his own family when he spent time with them in Canada. It seems important to note, however, that while Richard did not self-identify as struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder, his

experiences in a combat zone nevertheless sometimes affected his interactions with his children:

I remember one time we—uh I guess it was after Croatia—we went, uh we lived in Calgary at the time, we went on a trip into BC to Vancouver. And I'd spent the preceding several months in an area where you uh did not step off a paved road unless you were sure the engineers had uh swept the side of the road because the mine threat was so high. And we stopped at a, we stopped at a park in the—I think it was at Rogers Pass. And the kids they started running onto the grass in the park and I said stop, stop! Stay on the pavement! ... And then I realized, I burst out laughing afterwards, but I um—you know it does take a little while sometimes. Depending on the intensity of your tour, that's got a lot to do with it... The guys that have experienced one or more combat tours in Afghanistan uh trying to unwind from that intensity must be very, very difficult.

Veterans' struggles with service-related physical and psychological injuries, then, might be shared with their family members. Examples include secondary traumatization in children, or, stress, depression, and anxiety in the veteran's children as well as their spouse or any other family member sharing the household. As part of our conversation about family support in the context of Veterans Affairs Canada, Wade suggested that enabling the spouses to communicate directly with Veterans Affairs Canada, rather than being required to go through the veteran, would improve their ability to access help:

Wade: My wife cannot access any information through them. [*She cannot access any information*] on me. Because they're not the client. I'm the client. I would have to sign a piece of paper transferring authority to my wife to be able to manage me through Veterans Affairs. So.

Karen: And... you think the wife should be able to, right?

Wade: Well I think they should have the option... Yeah, they should be able to call VAC and say, hi, my husband's got some problems. How can I get him help? Sorry you're not the client, have your husband call. But my husband doesn't recognize that he's got the problem. So he'll never call. He'll end up, you know, hanging himself instead. You know. The spouses, the kids are the ones that see the issues, that see the anger you know and all that... The spouse should have her own

card. Like the one I showed you. She should have her card, independent of the member, but allowing her to access services...

Wade goes on to talk about his wife, who at the time of our conversation, was struggling with depression that he related to the injuries he sustained on deployment: “is that because of what happened to me? Probably”. His comments provide another example of how veterans’ struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder have also been the struggles of their families.

3.8 Veterans supporting veterans

The purpose of this chapter has been to provide some historical context for the need for a community of veterans, or, as participants have described themselves, a family of veterans. The first two sections of this chapter focus on legislation produced by the government of Canada to support veterans returning home following World War I and World War II. I have discussed how, in response to their dissatisfaction with government support including the Pension Act of 1919, Canadian veterans organized advocacy groups, such as the Great War Veterans Association and the Royal Canadian Legion. I also discussed the role that Canadian veterans played in helping the government of Canada to better handle the return of Canadian veterans following World War II, including the development of the Veterans Charter, the 1939 and 1940 changes to the Pension Act, and, the creation of the Department of Veterans Affairs.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the New Veterans Charter (2006), including some of the economic and family support that it provided in 2013 and 2014, and, support that it provided in the context of acknowledgment for veterans’ pain and suffering. I have included veteran advocates’ recommendations for improving the New

Veterans Charter, which I have largely drawn from reports to parliament that were produced by the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman (2013). This historical context provides important background information, as the New Veterans Charter was profuse in the national news media while I was doing my field research in 2013 and 2014.

Moreover, the national news media frequently related the New Veterans Charter to a crisis in mental wellness for veterans of the war in Afghanistan, including a cluster of soldiers' suicides. Participants brought up these suicides during several interviews, expressing their own frustrations and concerns with the New Veterans Charter.¹⁷

Most participants described Canada's veterans benefits system, before *and* after the New Veterans Charter, as imperfect. Accordingly, I have included some veterans' struggles with the difficulties and frustrations related to navigating it, particularly for those who have been seriously injured physically and psychologically and the members of their households. Finally, in this chapter, I addressed the stress and anxiety that unplanned exit from the military, such as medical release, can put on veterans and their families. One example I have included is the secondary traumatization of members of veterans' households (Figley 1993; Matsakis 1996).

By mandate of its constitution, riding community gatherings did not host discussions of members' political views regarding Canada's veterans' benefits system.

¹⁷ In 2019, in response to veterans' criticism of the New Veterans Charter, and their recommendations for its improvement, the Government of Canada adjusted the benefits system again. The Pension for Life includes three new benefits: a non-taxable "pain and suffering compensation," which replaces the Lump Sum payment, a non-taxable "additional pain and suffering compensation," and, a taxable "income replacement benefit" that "combines six pre-existing benefits into one, simpler benefit" (2019: www.veterans.gc.ca).

Consequently, when riding community members got together to ride, or to run fundraising and remembrance events, they did not spend a lot of time discussing their opinions about the Pension Act, the New Veterans Charter, or their struggles with Veterans Affairs Canada. Sometimes, they did consult and advise each other privately. Nevertheless, the historical context of the veterans benefits system in Canada, and the history of veterans' struggle to advocate for the government's support, informed (most) participants' preference for a community, or family, of veterans. I summarize this sentiment with the following paraphrase, a conflation of various and similar comments: the riding community 'is about veterans helping veterans, because who else is going to do it?' For some riding community members, then, there is a connection between veterans' experiences with the benefits systems and their sense of dis-emplacement following their release from the military. I focus more on this connection in Chapter Six. First, I turn to the organizational structure of the veteran riding community, and the attributes of its membership.

Chapter Four: The Veteran Riding Community

Before riding community members decided to move the group's monthly meetings to an Italian restaurant in Calgary's Southeast quadrant, they met regularly throughout the year at a bar in the Northeast. In 2013, Audrey, a civilian supporter member, arranged to have that same bar host the group's annual Christmas party and cook the traditional North American turkey dinner. The Christmas party was also a fund-raising event for the local Military Family Resource Centre. I attended as a supporter member. When I arrived, Warren, the group's president at that time, very graciously invited me to help carve the turkey along with two veteran members, Nathan and Quinton. He explained to me his preference that the carvers were chosen from among the general membership rather than the riding community's executive officers.

Before each of the carvers set about our task, we received and cheerfully donned a red apron with the words 'Santa's Little Helper' printed in white across the front. We then decided that Nathan would do the actual carving whilst Quinton and I plated the slices Nathan carved. The dinner was laid out buffet-style and the turkey was set up as the first station. Quinton and I passed out plates with turkey and members then helped themselves at the subsequent stations along the buffet line. With our operation well underway, and having apparently started from the opposite end of the buffet line, Owen soon showed up before me with a fully loaded plate; minus, of course, turkey. As Nathan was busy carving for someone else, I found myself a bit at a loss as to how I would serve Owen. My solution was to pick up another nearby plate of turkey recently laid out by Nathan and very (very) inelegantly dump the turkey from that plate onto Owen's. Owen lifted his

eyebrows as he looked from his plate to the empty one in my hand, and then he looked up at me. He was silent for a beat before laughing out loud and finally saying, “you’ll fit right in here”. I base my interpretation of Owen’s comment to me on my observations of, and conversations with, riding community members. Members saw themselves as sometimes messy, rowdy, noisy or uncouth, but always organized and effective. Once tasked with a job, members like Owen were confident in the group’s capacity to “get her done”.

In this chapter, I discuss the veteran riding community. First, I compare the veteran riding community to outlaw motorcycle clubs and describe the important ways in which they differ. I then address the organizational structure of the veterans riding community, including its executive positions. In the chapter’s third section, I discuss the community’s membership, which included both veterans and civilians. I address how veterans and civilian supporters related to each other in the context of the riding community, and, how the community operated to resolve that diversity. I also discuss diversity among veteran members. The membership was made up of veterans who served in all three branches of the Canadian Forces, including, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. My discussion of this diversity among veteran members includes my concept of degree of intimacy. Degree of intimacy refers to relatability between veterans. Relatability, I argue, is greater between veterans who share personal experience of intense military situations, such as combat. Shared, personal experiences of operational stress injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder between veterans also generated high relatability. Where relatability was high, so were emotional bonds between veterans. I

have interpreted these emotional bonds as a kind of intimacy. My discussion of diversity among veterans in the riding community approaches such intimacy as a resource that was not equally accessible to all veterans. I relate access to the resource of intimacy to experiences of particular kinds of trauma in military contexts. In the final section of this chapter, I discuss veteran women in the riding community. My discussion includes the relative invisibility of military women and veterans in Canada, and the relationship between that relative invisibility and women's self-identification as veterans in the riding community.

4.1 Comparing motorcycling organizations: outlaw motorcycle clubs and the veterans riding community

In November of 2012, veteran members of the riding community were invited to attend a Remembrance Day ceremony at a local military museum. Members stood at attention, alongside other local veterans, throughout the ceremony. Photographs of the ceremony were published in various local media the following day. Regarding a photo which appeared on a local newspaper's website, one member of the public posted the following comments:

In response to Monday's article on Remembrance Day, and the photograph of veterans standing next to the Silver Cross mothers, let me begin by saying that I am, and always will be, a huge supporter of our military. I can't help but be disappointed, however, to see military veterans portraying themselves as outlaw bikers. Veterans wearing leather vests adorned in nearly identical fashion as those worn by members of outlaw motorcycle gangs, standing next to veterans sharply dressed in Legion dress uniforms, is a contrast that troubles me deeply. I want you guys to be proud of your military service, but portraying yourselves as outlaws is, quite frankly, embarrassing (field journal, November 19, 2012).

Glenn, who was president of the riding community at that time, told me that he encountered the kind of disdain demonstrated in these comments fairly often, and that the

group's invitation to attend the ceremonies at the military museum was the result of members' efforts, over some time, to dismantle the outlaw biker image of deviance that individuals like the commenter have mistakenly associated with veteran riding community members. While various members of the riding community told me they had been associated with outlaw motorcycle clubs at one point or another in the past, the riding community was not one. The potential for confusion between the two indicated to me the relevance of addressing, if only briefly, the origins of such 'biker stigma,' and of what distinguished the riding community from an outlaw motorcycle club.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs first began springing up along the American west coast following World War II; and by the early 1950s, had spread across the US and into Canada (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle). Made up mostly of "traumatized and disaffected" World War II veterans who had returned to the US after the war, members of the early outlaw motorcycle clubs struggled with the challenges of transition (Librett 2008: 263). Outlaw biker groups, argues Mitch Librett, offered social structure and intense group commitment reminiscent of veteran's military experiences (2008: 263). Further, and unlike more "conventional activities," membership provided relief for veterans who were managing loss of "identity, companionship, and security" upon their military release (Quinn 2001: 388). In addition, unlike more conventional activities, the thrill of motorcycle riding likely engaged bodies that had become habituated to adrenaline-inducing combat situations.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs, according to Daniel Wolf, are clubs that have not registered with the official governing bodies for the sport of motorcycling in the USA

(American Motorcycle Association) or Canada (Canadian Motorcycle Association) (1991: chap. 1, Kindle). Registered clubs acquire authorization from these governing bodies “to participate in or sponsor sanctioned motorcycle events—mainly racing competitions” (1991: chap. 1, Kindle). Registration also situates clubs in alignment with local law enforcement (1991: chap. 1, Kindle). The image of outlaw bikers—members of motorcycle clubs not registered with the governing bodies of motorcycling—as deviant derives largely from a “riot” that took place in the town of Hollister, California in 1947 (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle; Librett 2008: 263); when about five hundred unregistered bikers disrupted an American Motorcycle Association (AMA) sponsored event by drinking, fighting, racing in the streets, tossing bottles, and riding their motorcycles into local bars and restaurants (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle). The incident resulted in 38 arrests out of thousands of bikers, property damage, and no deaths; leading some scholars to suggest that the incident’s designation as a riot is an exaggeration (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle; Barker 2014: 6; Librett 2008: 263). Nevertheless, photographs of the encounter published nationally by *Life* magazine played a key role in the stigmatization of the outlaw biker as deviant:

Life’s account started a mass-media chain reaction that saw the Hollister incident grow considerably in its sensationalistic portrayal, and, as a result, the image of the motorcyclist as deviant became more defined and immutable. In 1949, Frank Rooney wrote a short narrative entitled ‘Cyclist Raid,’ based on *Life’s* one-hundred-and-fifteen-word documentary. In 1951, ‘Cyclist Raid’ was published in *Harper’s* magazine. The *Harper’s* serial was read by Stanley Kramer, a Hollywood producer, who immortalized the ‘motorcycle riot’ in the movie *The Wild One*, released in 1953 (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle).

Following the incident in Hollister, the AMA released a statement asserting that 99 percent of the motorcyclists in attendance at the event were law-abiding citizens who

did not participate in the disruptive behaviour (Librett 2008: 263). Implied in the AMA statement was that the remaining one percent made up a “lunatic fringe” responsible for the violence (2008: 263). According to Librett, this implication was enthusiastically appropriated by outlaw motorcyclists as representative of a biker subculture; one that “rejects mainstream norms, maintaining an alternative social frame...” (2008: 263). The term ‘one percenter,’ Librett argues, was embraced by clubs like the Hell’s Angels and has since become synonymous with outlaw motorcycle clubs; embedded within, is a connotation of deviance from social norms (2008: 263). In conversation with me, veteran riding community members frequently referred to themselves as bikers. They used the term ‘one percenters’ to refer to members of outlaw motorcycle clubs, from whom they differentiated themselves (Librett 2008: 263). Wolf, author of one of the few existing in-depth ethnographies of an outlaw motorcycle club, nevertheless maintains that the lifeworld of the outlaw bikers he rode with existed somewhere between the “stereotype of ‘criminal deviants’” and “... frontier heroes, living out the freedom ethic that they feel the rest of society has largely abandoned” (1991: chap. 1, Kindle). More relevant to this discussion is some comparison between outlaw motorcycle clubs and the veteran riding community with which I did my field research.

When I asked riding community members how their organization differed from outlaw motorcycle clubs, most responded by describing three main differences. The first difference was who may be considered for membership. Typically, outlaw motorcycle clubs do not allow women to join as members (Wolf 1991: chap. 6, Kindle). In the veteran riding community, membership was not restricted to men. Women, although

significantly fewer in number than men, rode as veterans, participated in activities and decision-making, and wore the organization's crest. Below, Jack, a supporter member who at the time was serving as the riding community's road captain, reiterates this outlaw motorcycle club restriction, and mentions another difference between the two kinds of riding groups:

... Most MCs are like that. Most MCs, no women. Yeah. Most MCs are male members only. Most MCs have specific requirements as to the motorcycle you can ride.

According to Librett, outlaw motorcycle clubs require their members to ride Harley Davidson machines with a particular engine size (2008: 263). In the riding community, while 'Harleys' were popular with many members, members were also welcome to ride any kind of motorcycle they chose; which is not to say that they were not sometimes teased, usually good naturedly, for not choosing to ride a Harley Davidson.

The third, and perhaps the most significant difference according to riding community members, was commitment level. Whereas outlaw motorcycle clubs require "24/7 commitment to participation in club activities" (Librett 2008: 264), the veteran riding community prioritized commitment to the biker's family. As part of our conversation about the differences between motorcycle clubs and the veteran riding community, Ian and his wife Amber talked about how Ian, who at the time was serving as president at the formation level, sometimes had to remind lower ranking unit level leaders that family was meant to be members' first responsibility:

Ian: The differences are quite substantial and how they—you know basically it's club first, everything else comes second. That's how they normally think. And for our organization it's family first, the job that feeds the family, then *[names the*

organization]. And sometimes some of the guys forget that and they start going over, you know start pushing the—

Amber: Have to be pulled back

Ian: You know you gotta go, listen guys. You gotta stop. Family first. Right? You gotta make sure you can feed your family. Leave this [*names the organization*] stuff alone for a bit...

While membership for women, choice of motorcycle, and commitment level were the differences riding community members usually pointed out to me first; there are further distinguishing characteristics worth mentioning.

In outlaw motorcycle clubs, for example, individuals who wish to join as members spend time engaging in social activities with the group before an established member (or members) nominates them for membership (Librett 2008: 264). Once nominated, such individuals acquire the status of ‘prospect,’ which according to Wolf, may last between about three months to two years (1991: chap. 3, Kindle). Librett describes the prospecting phase as involving, “hazing rituals and identity re-formation exercises, carefully constructed to strengthen the ‘prospect’s’ ties to the group and weaken ties to the outside world” (2008: 264). Wolf describes the prospecting phase as socialization of new members into the group through learning and testing situations designed to show the prospect’s love for the club (1991: chap. 3, Kindle). Full members of an outlaw motorcycle club wear a club patch made of three pieces sewn onto the backs of their club vests or jackets; candidates for membership do not wear the club patch in full until they have completed the prospecting phase (1991: chap. 3, Kindle). As Ian and Amber explain in our exchange below, riding community members wore a one-piece patch, as joining the veteran riding community did not involve a prospecting process:

Karen: MC?

Ian: MC. There's a different between MC and riding organization. Okay? We are a riding organization. We're a not for profit riding organization. We're trying to be the good guys. Like basically — The MC have different rules. I mean let's say, if I wanted to start an MC, motorcycle club, I'd have to go to the Hell's Angels and say, hi I'm [*says his first and last name*]. I am going to be president of this club. This is what my three-piece patch—like you see the one we have is a one-piece patch. A three piece patch has a top rocker, whatever in the middle, and a bottom rocker

Amber: And they have to earn the pieces

Ian: And their pieces are earned, right? So you start off a prospect. Well we don't have prospects with us, with our organization. Prospects are guys that, 'okay go get me a coffee. Go get me a beer. I'm hungry, go get me a sandwich'. And like whoever wants to join that thing has to do—'go wash my bike, it's dirty.' Sorry, I was a private once. You don't tell me?? I don't care, it's not gonna happen...

While there was no formal prospecting process in the riding community, for non-veterans like myself who wished to join the riding community as supporter members, it was still necessary to know someone in the group. I decided to apply for membership after a few meetings with Glenn, president of the unit at the time. Following several conversations over the phone and in person he agreed to act as a sponsor for me on my application. With his support, the national leadership agreed to offer me membership as a supporter.¹⁸ The riding community's one-piece patch, or crest, reflects the difference in levels of commitment expected of members from each type of motorcycling group.

¹⁸ After I became a supporter member, riding community officers began to consider implementing a probationary year during which new members could demonstrate to the group that they would get on well with the membership, mostly by participating in group activities. Following the probationary year's completion, new members would receive their one-piece crest. The probation year was not meant to be a prospecting period; it would not involve hazing rituals or function to separate new members from the larger society.

Where outlaw motorcycle clubs operate as secret societies whose membership prefers to separate itself from the outside world (Wolf 1991: chap. 1, Kindle), the veteran riding community, for the duration of my field research, made efforts to bridge soldier-civilian understanding gaps by working on remembrance projects and participating in charity events within the larger civilian community.

Also, as indicated in Ian's comments above, characteristic of outlaw motorcycle clubs is the acquisition and maintenance "of dominance within a particular geographic area" (Librett 2008: 263). Club activities, according to Librett, are designed to support and reproduce that dominance. Outlaw motorcycle clubs, he writes:

... Engage in economic activities that are necessary to sustain the viability of the group in terms of motorcycle maintenance, housing needs, club facility upkeep, and even provide for welfare and legal defense funds for members. 'Runs'¹⁹ are in essence celebratory representations of their culture—ritualistic outbursts of exuberance and solidarity (2008: 264).

Librett's description of outlaw motorcycle clubs recalls some aspects of Goffman's conception of total institutions: populated by individuals cut off from wider society for long periods of time and sharing "an enclosed, formally administered round of life" (1961: xiii). As noted by Wolf, outlaw motorcycle club members' minimal contact with the outside world is self-selected and their 'round of life,' while adhering to a particular, hierarchical structure, is most certainly not so formally administered as with institutions that house the homeless, the elderly, mental patients, prisons, or even the military (1961: 4-5). Similar to Goffman's total institutions however, Librett and Wolf describe the

¹⁹ Wolf describes 'runs' as "motorcycle tours" (1991: chap. 4, Kindle). Veteran riding community members usually used the term 'rally' or 'gathering' to describe the converging of members from riding communities across Canada at particular destinations; for example, in order to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM).

spheres of life such as work, sleep, and play, which tend to be separate for those living in the wider (Euro-North American) society, as becoming conflated in the outlaw motorcycle club; and the prospecting process as helping to effect the isolation of recruits from those people and routines that previously made up their daily life and support systems (Librett 2008; Wolf 1991; Goffman 1961: 14, 19).

By comparison, the riding community claimed no geographical dominance and membership was generally confined to the sphere of play or recreation, if often imbued with meaning and purpose. Where riding activities involved the raising of funds members delivered them to various charities and organizations, usually but not exclusively ones that supported military veterans and their families. Otherwise, rides, while organized for members by the road captain, were attended for fun and during members' free time. Community members did pay a membership fee annually, which supported the organization's treasury. They did support each other morally and emotionally, but unlike Wolf's description of an outlaw motorcycle club, riding community members did not depend on each other financially (1991: chap. 1, Kindle); although, they often tried to help each other out when members fell on hard times.

Lastly, the riding community organized its meeting places quite differently than do, for example, outlaw motorcycle clubs, according to Wolf. Wolf describes the outlaw motorcycle club clubhouse he became familiar with as a relatively high-security meeting place for outlaw motorcycle club business and recreation, which was run and maintained by its members. Non-members who visited the outlaw motorcycle club clubhouse did so only by invitation and were required to be escorted by a member (1991: chap. 1, 2,

Kindle). By contrast, riding community members met at a local bar for their official monthly meetings, sometimes for their official social functions (their Christmas party, for example), and frequently if less formally for food and drinks. Executive officers and the bar ownership agreed the bar was a suitable meeting place for community members, but the establishment was almost always open to the public during meetings; sometimes, the riding community reserved the bar for riding community special events.

4.2 Organization and executive positions

The riding community which made up the field-site for this research project was a local branch of a national “veteran-based motorcycle organization”; which I refer to from here forward as the National Veterans Motorcycle Organization,²⁰ or, the NVMO (NVMO Constitution 2013, version 1.4: 4). Two Canadian Forces veterans conceived of the NVMO when they met at a charity ride in 2003. According to the NVMO’s web page, the two veterans shared interest in motorcycle riding and supporting Canada’s veteran community. They believed that the experiences they shared created a kind of family bond between them, and that it was a bond that extended to all veterans. Section 4.2 provides a brief description of the NVMO’s organizational structure, including the executive roles designed to reproduce it.

The NVMO’s organizational structure is reminiscent of the Canadian Forces Army regimental system. Accordingly, the smallest groupings were referred to in the organization’s constitution as ‘units’ with several units making up a ‘formation’. The NVMO was made up of three formations each corresponding with three geographic

²⁰ The National Veterans Motorcycle Organization (NVMO) is a pseudonym.

regions of Canada (East, Central and West), “rider at large members”, and various units located internationally in the USA, the UK and Europe (NVMO Constitution 2013, version 1.4: 4). The veteran riding community I spent time with was one unit among several that made up the formation corresponding to Western Canada. Rather than corresponding to their geographic location, units were named after military battles, with proper approval of NVMO’s “chain-of-command” (2013: 5).

Members of the NVMO held executive positions at three levels: National, Formation, and Unit. Four executive positions existed at all three levels: President, Vice-President, Sergeant-at-arms and Road Captain. An Operations Officer position existed at both the national and formation levels, and a Membership Coordinator position existed at the Formation level. Various support positions also existed at the national level, including; a quartermaster who ran the national kitshop, a webmaster, and a padre who administered to all members’ “moral health and welfare” (2013: 10). Less a position with specific administrative duties than an honorific, certain individuals at all levels wore crest identification as Old Guard. The Old Guard are described in the constitution as, “those who, due to their life experience and personality provide a bridge between all generations of veterans, citizens and riders”; and whom the leadership has decided to recognize for having, “been there and done that” (2013: 5, 9). The Old Guard also served as advisors at National and Formation levels. Similarly, the position of Rider-in-chief could be awarded to select members at the Formation and National levels as an honorary appointment of individuals “who by their past and current example set the standard” (2013: 9). Finally, and quite simplified here, the position of Skirmisher was not situated at Unit, Foundation

or National levels but rather existed “to deal with, coordinate or provide communications with individuals or organizations outside...” the NVMO (2013: 5).

As my participation and observations took place almost exclusively at the unit level, the executive positions most relevant to this discussion include Unit President, Unit Vice-President, Unit Sergeant-at-arms and Unit Road Captain. According to the Constitution, the president of a unit was elected or appointed (by higher level leadership) depending on whether the unit was newly formed or had been established for some time. So, in more established or older units, the membership elected its president, and this was the case in NVMO unit I did my research with. The Unit President served three-year terms and was tasked with upholding the organization’s constitution at the unit level. He²¹ conducted general and executive meetings and co-ordinated riding community activities with other executives. He was also responsible for “public relations contact for outsiders” and correspondence within and without the unit (2013: 13). The Unit President was tasked with appointing the remaining three executive positions in the unit (Vice-President, Sergeant-At-Arms and Road Captain), although he could also choose to have the membership elect the remaining executives (2013: 14).

According to the Constitution, the Unit Vice-President was tasked with assisting “the Unit President as required in running the unit” (2013: 11). The Unit Sergeant-At-Arms was responsible for maintaining unit discipline, tradition and property, as well as managing new member orientation, dues, and other unit related funds. The Unit Road

²¹ While all executive positions were constitutionally open to women, in the time I spent doing field research with the riding community, only men served as Unit President, Vice-President, Sergeant-At-Arms or Road Captain.

Captain controlled all activity on the roads, planned ride routes, and coordinated the unit's participation in charity rides. He also advised members regarding road, motorcycle, and motorcycle equipment safety, and was responsible for educating new riders in road etiquette, road signals and procedures, and group riding. In accordance with the constitution, the riding community chose to create Secretary and Treasurer support positions as well (2013: 11). Members in these positions also managed tasks related to new members and riding community funds.

Elections at the unit level, according to the constitution, were required to be "simple" and "fast" (2013: 13). Campaigning was not permitted. Accordingly, the single election that I attended took place at a monthly meeting; members cast their votes on a piece of paper and the results were announced immediately. Members knew beforehand that they would be voting that day. The constitution further required elections of other unit executives to not take place at the same time as elections for unit president, to ensure that some experienced leadership remained in place while the new president got used to his or her new role (2013: 14). Everyday decision-making was similarly based on consensus whereby members participated in shaping the activities of the riding community (Wolf 1991, chap. 10, Kindle). Typically, the president put issues relevant to the unit to community members at monthly meetings and members voted with a show of hands.

Conflict resolution, according to the constitution, similarly adhered to chain-of-command. Where conflicts could not be resolved within the unit, Old Guard representatives from other units and formations were to be used as a resource for conflict

resolution. Behaviour that warranted disciplinary action included public discrediting of the NVMO, slander of other NVMO members, and deliberate contravention of the NVMO base principle. Only national executives had the authority to dismiss members from the NVMO (2013: 16). Any disagreements I directly observed were handled within the riding community (unit level), mostly through deliberation, sometimes through heated argument, and occasionally through physical confrontation. No riding community members were dismissed from the NVMO while I was doing my field research.

4.3 The membership

In its constitution, the NVMO describes itself as “... a veteran-based organization, uniting both veteran and veteran supporter” (2013: 4). Before discussing some of the ways in which members of the riding community managed this internal diversity, I will first define it. According to the NVMO, a veteran was any Canadian Forces Regular Forces or Reserve member who had completed their trades training, completed their Canadian Ranger training, or was a serving or retired member of the RCMP. NVMO veterans, therefore, served in all three branches of the Canadian Forces, including, the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Allied Partners or members of NATO meeting the same criteria and living in Canada were also considered veterans. Veteran members had full voting privileges and could hold any position in the organization (2013: 4). Veteran members were also welcome to join other legally recognized organizations that supported veterans such as The Royal Canadian Legion or one of various regimental associations (2013: 20); indeed, many of the veteran members I spoke with were active with veterans’ organizations in addition to the riding community. While membership did not necessarily

require riding community members to participate in fundraising and remembrance events that did not include motorcycle riding, members were encouraged to do so.

There were two official categories of veteran in the riding community: rider and non-rider. Veteran riding members owned a motorcycle or trike²² and wore the NVMO crest on the back of a black (usually) leather vest, which identified them as a veteran of the Canadian Forces Land, Sea or Air Force. They also wore various badges indicating the NVMO formation and unit they belonged to, their number of years active in the organization, and their proficiency at riding. NVMO regulations stated that only the organization's crest was to be worn on the back of the vest; the remaining badges occupied particular placements on the front of the vest (2013: 20). Non-riding veterans were veterans who did not own a motorcycle or trike but enjoyed the camaraderie of the riding community and (sometimes) also wished to support riding community fundraising and remembrance events (2013: 20). Non-riding veterans wore the NVMO crest, along with formation and unit insignia as well as badges indicating their years active in the community. Non-riders who later acquired motorcycles or trikes of their own and wished to ride with the community underwent a mentoring period. After achieving a specific distance riding with the group, and demonstrating proficiency at group riding protocol and the "rules of the road," new riders were awarded the Winged Wheel patch; which indicated their changed status as veteran riders (2013: 20).

Supporters were civilian members who never served in the military. Mostly, they were veteran members' spouses; occasionally, they were close friends of veteran

²² A trike is a three-wheeled, powered vehicle. The engines of trikes that were ridden by NVMO veterans were comparable to motorcycle engines.

members. Supporters had limited voting rights compared with veterans' full voting rights. Specifically, supporters were not permitted to vote on changes to the NVMO constitution, its philosophy, or other matters as might be directed by national executives (2013: 21). They wore the NVMO supporter crest (rather than the veteran crest) on their black leather vest along with formation and unit insignia, and badges indicating their years active in the community. Riding supporters also wore the Winged Wheel badge indicating their riding proficiency. Regulations regarding vests and the placement of insignia and badges were the same for supporters and veteran members. Some supporters accompanied riding veteran members as passengers on their motorcycles and others supporters did not attend group rides at all but went to meetings, social events and supported community fundraising and remembrance events. Occasionally, non-riding supporters were awarded their Winged Wheel after acquiring their own motorcycle and completing the mentoring period.

According to Wolf, outlaw motorcycle club members managed diversity within their club by creating clean and firm boundaries between themselves and the outside world (1991: chap. 11, Kindle). Further, he describes an outlaw motorcycle club as “an experiment in utopian communalism” (1991: chap. 13, Kindle). Where this experiment is successful, he argues, the extremes of “individual anarchy” and “institutional bureaucratization” are balanced through political participation and egalitarianism (1991: chap. 13, Kindle):

It is the element of political participation, ‘we all get our say,’ and the strong sense of equality, ‘we’re all brothers,’ that allow an outlaw motorcycle club to accommodate the fact of internal diversity without either infringing upon the freedom of its members or, alternatively, lapsing into unbridled self-interest.

Participation and egalitarianism enable the club to bridge the paradox between individualism-in-community ('the club gives me freedom; it gives me the freedom to do and be what I want') and structure-of-community ('bike clubs are more structured and hierarchical than any other organization except perhaps the military'...) (1991: chap. 13, Kindle).

Wolf's perspective on how outlaw motorcycle club bikers managed diversity in their membership is useful for discussing how the riding community managed a membership consisting of both veterans and civilians. Rather than relying on egalitarianism however, the riding community managed its diverse membership by maintaining its opposite.

Made up of both veterans and civilians, the drawing of clean and firm boundaries by riding community members between an ex-military membership and a civilian outside world was not only impossible but went against the basic principle of the NVMO. Moreover, members of the riding community were not exclusively motorcycle riders (although most members, veteran and civilian, did ride). Rather than through egalitarianism and full political participation, in the riding community, the membership managed tension between 'veteran-ness' and 'civilian-ness' at least two ways: 1) mutual agreement that civilian members' role in the riding community was to support veterans, and, 2) the withholding of full voting privileges from civilian supporters. The discussion below regarding changes National HQ made to the NVMO constitution, and how the riding community decided to handle those changes internally, aptly demonstrates how local leadership and supporters managed diversity in the context of 'veteran-ness' and 'civilian-ness' within the membership.

According to Version 1.4 of the 2013 Constitution, either a military veteran or a civilian supporter could fill the position of Unit President; however, if the President was a

supporter, the Vice-President was required to be a veteran²³ (and “vice versa” in the reverse situation) (2013: 11). This aspect of Version 1.4 came into effect about 11 months into my field research. When I began my field research, the constitution required unit presidents to be military veterans. The following excerpt from my field journals addresses the rationale for the change, according to the National President’s comments at the organization’s annual general meeting in the summer of 2013. He was introducing the general membership to Headquarter’s decision to put the proposed changes to a vote:

It used to be that a unit had to have a vet as President *and* VP. Now it could be that vets only need to be President *or* VP... Rationale is that sometimes, in very small units, there are not enough vets willing/able to take on exec roles due to, for i.e., challenges related to PTSD (Field journal notes, August 3, 2013).

The National President told the general membership that in situations where a struggling veteran was available to occupy one of the two top executive roles in a small unit, but perhaps not available to very effectively lead in it, a supporter in the other top executive role could take up the slack. The alternative in such situations, he told the membership, was shutting down the unit; and he preferred not to do this because shutting down such units in turn shut down NVMO outreach and support to potentially struggling veteran members.

Although national veteran leaders sometimes got involved with the operation of individual motorcycle units, generally, individual units were meant to run autonomously.

²³ While unit presidents had to be NMVO members, veteran or supporter, at the formation and national levels, the position of President had to be filled by Canadian Forces military veterans, or Canadian Forces members who were still serving (Constitution 2013, version 1.4: 13).

Individual units remained autonomous so long as they generally upheld the base principle of the riding organization:

The (*NVMO*) is about our brothers and sisters coming together, sharing past experiences, riding and helping established charities whenever possible. This is and will remain the base principle of the (*NVMO*). In short, the (*NVMO*) is about ‘riding, having fun and helping others,’ our motto is “strength and honour”—we are a veteran based organization, not a veteran only organization—our greatest strength is in uniting veterans with veteran supporters in communities nationwide—providing ongoing services on motorcycles (Constitution 2013, version 1.4: 13-14).

In the particular unit I did my research with, the role of civilian supporters was quite explicit. Supporters supported. They supported the unit’s veteran members in their fundraising and remembrance efforts. Occasionally, veteran members supported civilian members as well. One civilian supporter member told me, for example, that she sought advice from other veterans in the riding community during a time when her partner, a veteran member, was struggling with his psychological injuries. In response, they made concerted efforts to make her partner feel less isolated and boost his morale. Their efforts to support her partner, in turn, provided her with much-needed respite. In general, however, the role of supporters in the riding community was to support rather than lead.

However, according to some riding community veterans, supporters in other units had, in the past, lost sight of their support role. These civilians in other units, they told me, sought greater influence over decision-making in their units. Referring to their own civilian members, veterans said, ‘thankfully, our supporters aren’t like that. They support us’ (paraphrased). Nevertheless, the riding community’s veteran membership preferred not to adopt the changes suggested by the National President at the annual general meeting into their unit. Some unit veteran members, at that time, remained concerned that

civilian supporters in leadership roles could change the organization from one that is veteran based to one in which veterans were no longer speaking for other veterans. The following exchange is part of my conversation with Jack. We were discussing some unit members' perspective on the recent changes to the NVMOs' constitution:

Jack: 'K. I think one of the main things—not so much threatened what the unit represented. I think they were going, they thought it was going to weaken it as a veteran's organization too much and push it more into a civilian organization that allowed veterans to be a part of it.

Karen: Like the Legion

Jack: Yeah. And they, that's the main focus that they didn't like. I don't, personally don't think that's gonna happen. But I can see their point... They really want things to stay military. And they don't want it to be watered down and become the Legion....

Karen: Okay

Jack: Um myself personally, I don't think that's gonna happen... There is a push in that one to make sure it doesn't happen...

Karen: In the... Formation? Really?

Jack: Yeah, yeah. We're putting together our own... Standard Operating Procedures booklet. And right now it's all four top positions... President, Vice President, Sgt. at Arms and Road Captain... have to be veterans.²⁴ Period, end of story. They cannot be a civilian... Which is exactly what we've done, in our unit, with the exception of Road Captain. The top three positions have to be veterans and we voted all that as a unit.

Karen: And that's up to uh—

Jack: The individual units. Yeah. It starts at Formation then it goes down to individual units, they can make any decisions they want...

²⁴ According to the new (at that time) constitution: "only veterans or CF serving members will hold titles as Formation or National presidents" (Constitution 2013, version 1.4: 27).

It seems important to note that I never directly observed power struggles between veteran and civilian members in this context. Rather, civilian members seemed generally satisfied with their support role in the riding community. In their conversations with me, veterans generally expressed their appreciation of civilian members' support. Nevertheless, by voting to limit supporter access to top positions of power in the riding community, veteran members managed their internal diversity by legitimizing difference.

According to Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberté, over time, the Canadian Forces has motivated not only its members to “conform to its requirements” of combat readiness²⁵ but has tried “to motivate” military spouses “to play backup roles” as well (1994: 69). Following Harrison and Laliberté, an argument could be made for support discourse in the riding community as a direct import from members' former lifeworld experiences as Canadian Forces members and military spouses. Moreover, support discourse as an import from former military lifeworlds might help situate the relatively non-problematic willingness I observed among riding community members to reproduce veteran-ness and civilian-ness in the riding community. Following this conception also enables us to approach situations of veteran/supporter tension as examples of civilian members in breach of their support role.

In her comments below, Quinn, a veteran rider, addressed value she felt supporters added to the riding community:

Supporter brings to the [NVMO], well a lot of—it's very—a lot of good benefits because that gave the opportunity for you to work closely with your spouse. Or

²⁵ Harrison and Laliberté define combat readiness as, “the doctrine that a moment's notice a given quantity of person—and equipment—power must be prepared to fight” (1994: 19).

some people that do understand what being a veteran is or what an active military person is... Or somebody who's served... Having the supporters with you it just give you like... support. Exactly what it is. They understand you, you know. They believe in what you've done and where you heading for.

William similarly expressed his appreciation for civilian riding community members in terms of support:

Supporters? Yeah for sure. I think they bring a lot. They have a lot of knowledge, they bring a lot of caring, they bring a lot of love, they bring a lot of help. They assist all the time with what we do. They don't just, you know, 'oh let me go do this' blah, blah, blah. So it's great having supporters come in. And it's nice that you know they're either related to the military person or whatever but they don't always have to be. You know just say, 'hey I knew somebody that was in. Meant a great deal to me. I'd like to support you'.

Tension potentially developed for Quinn in circumstances where supporters might take on leadership roles:

You see there is a lot a people, see there is a lot—There is a big difference between military and civilian. Now the military would call the civilians civvies. So... a lot of military don't take direction very well from civvy... A lot of veterans don't take direction from supporters. And depending on—like I'm having issues with some supporters [*in other units*]. You know? But that's me... By bringing supporter in, giving them support—more power, which I don't have a problem with it. But I have an issue with a supporter running for President or VP. Uh, welcome to be a Sergeant at Arms, welcome to be a Road Captain, there's no problem there. But it has, still has—in the leadership role there should be a... a veteran.

I interpret Quinn's analogy—supporter is to veteran in the riding community as civilian was to Canadian Forces member in the military—as an importing of her practical knowledge of support from the military into the riding community. Reiterating what I have noted above, I generally observed civilian riding community members to be accepting of, and compliant with, their support role in the unit. However, spouses and family members potentially more resistant to support discourse were not members of the

riding community while I was doing my field research. Therefore, I was unable to compare their perspectives on the discourse of support.

While veteran members legislated difference in the riding community in order to manage its veteran and civilian membership, they could not similarly manage diversity among themselves. The NVMO 2013 constitution, for example, states the following: “all veteran members will respect each other regardless of the rank earned, or unit, trade or experience gained throughout their military career” (2013: 27). Various veteran riding community members nevertheless expressed to me an implicit hierarchy of experience; it usually registered in conversations about theatres of operation and PTSD.

Some of Calgary’s veteran organizations were organized more or less according to the military operations its membership participated in during their military careers. According to Victor, this organizing principle is better understood as the relationship between particular military operations and having had experiences in common:

Karen: ... Are there other veterans’ groups that you’re uh, that you’ve been in?

Victor: Other than the Legion for a short period of time, no.

Karen: And the Legion wasn’t a good match?

Victor: Well no because we’re, we’re different eras. And we were uh dealing with Second World War vets and like I said as much as I had in common there was a whole lot that, that we didn’t have in common. And it was very difficult. They wouldn’t, couldn’t, wouldn’t talk about a lot of their experiences because um it was different and people didn’t understand. Even veterans didn’t understand...

Karen: Experiences so different that you couldn’t find common ground that way?

Victor: Exactly... You talk about your war. And you know so for First World War veterans that’s what they can talk about, that’s what their experiences is, are. And that’s what people are talking to understand. Second World War is different. Korean conflict is different. Um and the Cold War, the Cold War, peacekeeping is

different from that... So people didn't relate to what you were talking about. But you know having said that, that's a lot of the um I guess more intense parts of the service. But the rest of it. The military lifestyles and going through things like basic training and courses. You can, you can relate to that um and that's why I like the [NVMO].

Besides a common interest in motorcycle riding, Victor liked being in the riding community because membership offered him the opportunity to spend time with other veterans of the Cold War and peacekeeping operations whose experiences he could relate to better than the experiences of veterans of World War II or the war in Korea. His comments also express a kind of tiered sense of relatability made up of more and less intense 'parts of service'. I refer to this tiered perspective on relatability among veterans, based on operations-specific military experience, as degree of intimacy. The more veterans shared personal experience of intense military contexts, the more they could relate to each other. I interpret this relatability as also generating a heightened sense of closeness—of intimacy—between some veterans.

As I have noted earlier in the methods section, in the first months of my field research I attended a meeting with another, non-riding, veteran's organization. One of the topics brought up that night was members' interest in finding ways to support young veterans. They were talking about the difficulty their organization was having recruiting younger veterans as members. When I asked for his thoughts on this topic, William (a veteran riding community member), much like Victor, invoked degree of intimacy in his response:

Karen: So uh young vets right, so probably some of the Afghanistan conflict guys—

William: Yeah, for sure. I think they get them to try to join because they want to

keep that support group open. And they wanna hear the stories of these young guys and know how to deal with future issues maybe or whatnot because maybe some of the older veterans cannot, I mean they can relate but it's a totally different thing. Like you're talking to a guy maybe he was I don't know Egypt, Golan Heights trying to talk whatever with a guy that's been in uh Afghanistan three times at 25 years old. Uh they can relate but maybe they can't relate...

The concept of degree of intimacy is useful for approaching diversity among veteran riding community members in the motorcycle unit as well. The following excerpt from my conversation with Audrey and Warren provides an apt example:

Warren: Um for the most part, other than my family not many people knew that I was a veteran up until I joined the *[NVMO]*.

Audrey: When he signed up for the *[NVMO]*. He often talks about having that conversation at the booth—

Warren: With Ian.

Audrey: About how he wasn't a veteran.

Warren: I'm not a vet. I still sometimes feel that I'm really not a vet. Because nobody ever shot at me. Nobody, like I wasn't that kinda—I served, yeah. But... And Ian basically said no, you signed man. You're a vet. You signed. Don't give me your bullshit. You signed. Nobody made you sign that paper. I said yeah okay. And that's where it started. And I still to this day I feel a little bit guilty about it. Because you know we got some serious veteran shit in our unit. You know that right?

Karen: I do.

I interpret “serious veteran shit in our unit” to mean those veteran riding community members who were struggling with operational stress injuries sustained during their military careers, or, what Victor called the “more intense parts of service.” Members who were considered to be dealing with “serious veteran shit” mostly (but not exclusively) served in the Army, on dangerous peacekeeping missions the Canadian Forces participated in parts of Africa and the Balkans. It was less common (but not unheard of)

for the phrase “serious veteran shit” to be used in reference to the experiences of veteran members who served with the Navy or the Air Force.

In his comments above, Warren makes a connection between veteran access to high degrees of intimacy and experiences of “serious veteran shit,” an expression also connoting some members’ struggles with post-traumatic stress disorder. Several riding community members expressed to me a very specific conception of post-traumatic stress disorder that further, if very quietly, operationalized difference among veteran members. Jack, for example, described post-traumatic stress disorder as, “you witness something that you cannot live with.” According to Jack, post-traumatic stress disorder could also result from killing someone or watching someone die. He said that living with post-traumatic stress disorder, for veterans, included dreaming about such experiences frequently, and having their lives interrupted by them.

My interpretation of the perspective offered by Jack on post-traumatic stress disorder is that psychological injuries sustained in combat or (body) recovery contexts, perhaps even in the context of a single event, rendered a more legitimate form of trauma then, for example, trauma sustained outside the contexts of combat or recovery. It is important to explicitly note that this assessment of more or less legitimate forms of trauma was generated among members of the riding community. I have observed such judgment being made by participants during the course of my field research. I am not, myself, making them here.

Following the perspective on trauma offered by Jack, trauma sustained over time in contexts of secondary wounding would similarly be considered less legitimate.

Matsakis describes secondary wounding as occurring when “the people, institutions, caregivers, and others to whom the survivor turns to for emotional, legal, financial, medical or other assistance” respond with disbelief, denial and discounting, or, with blaming, stigmatizing or the denying of assistance (Matsakis 1996: 90). Accounts of veterans struggling with Veterans Affairs Canada over benefit claims is one relevant example of secondary wounding that was both circulating in the media while I was doing my field research and also occasionally addressed with me in conversation. Another example circulating in the media in 2013 includes wounding sustained by women RCMP veterans from repeated and prolonged incidences of sexual harassment and assault.²⁶ Degree of intimacy, then, was a resource not equally accessible to all veteran members. As noted by Victor however, veteran members related to each other in other ways, including; “the military lifestyles and going through things like basic training and courses,” remembrance activities, and, of course, motorcycle riding. Whilst engaged quite implicitly by riding community members, sometimes operating inward towards one’s self and sometimes operating outward, degree of intimacy is relevant here as one way in which veteran members managed diversity amongst themselves in the riding community.

4.4 Women veterans in the riding community

I came to know seven women who were also members of the riding community. Five women were supporters and also spouses of veteran members; two women were veterans. The supporters did not ride motorcycles in formation with the group, although most of them occasionally participated in rides as passengers. Both veterans rode motorcycles and

²⁶ See Chapter Six for more detailed discussion of secondary wounding in the context of riding community members.

participated in rides as motorcyclists. All seven women participated in the various remembrance, fundraising and social events that took place while I was doing my research. Some of these supporter members were married while their husbands (or ex-husbands) were still actively serving. Alternatively, some of these supporters did not have experience as the spouse of a serving military member but had a parent or grandparent who served in the Canadian Forces, or, they expressed to me either an affinity for things military or their own interest in serving, which they never fulfilled. Drawing on my unstructured conversations with these supporters, I interpret their relationship to support discourse, in the context of the riding community, as having been largely non-ambivalent.

Social scientists have addressed various and complicated struggles facing many wives and other partners of Canadian, American and British military members; including, secondary traumatization (Matsakis 2007), battery, sexual harassment and sexual assault (Harrison and Laliberté 1994, Harrison 2002, Matsakis 2007), and the many and potentially violent intersections of race, class, gender and the military (Woodward and Winter 2007). Such conversations are important to both veterans and civilians nationwide. However, for this project, I have chosen to focus more on veteran members' experiences of the riding community, rather than supporters' experiences prior to their membership in the riding community.

Matsakis (1996, 2007) and Rachel Woodward and Trish Winter (2007) address American and British female service members' experiences of trauma and wounding resulting from pervasive sexual harassment and sexual assault sustained throughout their military careers. Matsakis has made connections between the prevalence of sexual

harassment in the American military and inadequate legal definitions. She cites as an example a section of the 1992 Department of Veterans Affairs health care act which, she argues, implies that for sexual harassment to have taken place, an individual must have been threatened with punishment or retaliation for having not complied with “unwanted or uninvited sexual attention, pressure for sexual relations, or sexual assault” (2007: 261). Citing women’s advocates and mental health professionals, Matsakis argues that such behaviour must be considered sexual or gender harassment regardless of whether threats of punishment or retaliation were made (2007: 261). Moreover, according to Matsakis, verbal and nonverbal behaviours that convey, “insulting, hostile and degrading images about women” also belong in a definition of sexual harassment (2007: 261). One of the consequences of inadequate definitions of sexual and gender harassment in the American military, she argues, is they dissuade individuals from understanding or recognizing they have experienced harassment; which in turn affects the reporting of incidents.

In this excerpt from our phone conversation, Irene, a veteran whom I contacted through a veteran’s advocacy Facebook group and who was not a member of the riding community, addresses one of her experiences of harassment in the Canadian Forces in the 1980s:

Irene: ... When I was in the military there was a lot of prejudice against women. They did not want women in the military in 1981. The old boys club only wanted women for one thing. And I worked at the infantry school. And I was very shapely. I got kicked off of parade because there was too much daylight between my arm and my waist. When I was in my CFs with the, with the white belt? Because you could tell that I was very shapely. As a matter of fact the sergeant major kicked me off parade and said to me exactly this, he said, ‘get this effing Barbie Doll off my parade’.

Karen: Oh my God!

Irene: Honestly. I wasn't allowed to work in certain places because they didn't want the Barbie Doll distracting the boys from doing their job...

A broader approach to defining sexual harassment, as suggested by Matsakis, would likely include Irene's experience.

Indeed, the findings of the 2015 External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces reported similarly regarding the connections between the Department of National Defence's overly narrow definition of sexual harassment and the prevalence of sexual misconduct in the Canadian Forces:

In the case of sexual harassment in particular, the CAF definition is not only overly-complex, it is also unduly narrow and fails to capture a broad range of inappropriate sexual conduct... The definition of sexual harassment should cover not only individual and quid pro quo harassment, but also unwelcome sexual conduct that contributes to a hostile organizational culture. This includes sexual comments or jokes that are not necessarily addressed to a particular person, but which create a negative sexualized environment. In addition, the definition of sexual harassment should not be limited to incidents that occur in the workplace, given that members generally live, work, and socialize together within organizational structures created by the CAF (Deschamps 2015: www.forces.gc.ca).

According to Marie DesChamps, the Canadian Forces members interviewed for the review found Canadian Forces criteria for sexual harassment to be complex, unclear and confusing. She argues that this context made it difficult not only for "victims" to decide whether they should complain, but difficult as well for responsible officers to determine if sexual harassment had occurred (2015). Beyond a clearer and broader definition of sexual harassment, Deschamps' recommendations for addressing the prevalence of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct in the Canadian Forces include the following: improved acknowledgement by the Canadian Forces that sexual harassment and misconduct is a pervasive problem, a strategy to effect "cultural change" in the Canadian

Forces, and the “creation of an independent center for accountability for sexual assault and harassment outside” the Canadian Forces to which Canadian Forces members can report incidents of sexual harassment and misconduct (2015).

According to Matsakis, trauma refers to wounding of both body and psyche and can be incurred in a single event or “in persons who... are subject to nearly constant and unabated stress as part of their job” (1996: 17). Psychologically, she argues, trauma can affect one’s “will to live” and sense of dignity and ontological security (1996: 17). It is therefore also important to recognize contexts of secondary wounding among serving members and veterans who are women, and have chosen to seek help or claim benefits for their psychological injuries, but instead of receiving assistance have encountered the denial of, disbelief in, or discounting of their traumatic experiences. My intention with this brief discussion of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct in the Canadian Forces is to suggest that women wounded in this way during their military careers may experience veterans’ organizations such as the riding community very differently, in the context of their ability to access the resource of intimacy, then veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder who are also men.

Some members discussed their perspective on gender stereotyping in the riding community as well. One veteran riding member, for example, told me that women rarely got executive positions in the NVMO and that, when they did, it was usually support or administrative roles—jobs she characterized as “women’s jobs.” I witnessed one exception to this observation when a woman veteran was appointed to the Old Guard. The following excerpt from my field journal is an example of how one veteran confronted

gender stereotyping in the veterans riding community, and sought acknowledgement of both her veteran-ness and her identification as a woman. Along with other riding community members, I was helping to erect the crosses on Memorial Drive in preparation for Remembrance Day. Before the crosses were installed, riding community members drilled holes in the ground into which the cross bases were dropped:

Used the big drill today. There's a small drill for 'piloting' the base hole and a large one for drilling the base hole. Quinn took a picture of me with the big drill and then asked me to take one of her with it. She said she wanted to show, with the pictures of us, that women do the hard work too (field journal, October 20, 2013).

The photos went up on the Field of Crosses website which could be accessed both by riding community members and members of the public.

Some women in the riding community also wore a patch, sewn onto the front of their vest, which read, 'women are veterans too'. The phrase seems to both support and search to overcome the observation made by Matsakis, who notes, in the context of American military women, "... today's women veterans and soldiers, like those who came before them, remain largely invisible" (2007: 249). It is helpful to approach the 'women are veterans too' patch, along with Matsakis' comments regarding the invisibility of American military women, from the perspective Woodward and Winter's conception of military femininities in the British Army (2007: 74).

Two aspects of Woodward and Winter's military femininities are relevant to what I am calling some women veteran riding community members' perceptions of relative invisibility: the containment of military women to support roles, and, limited options for women to develop identification as soldiers (2007: 22, 76). The authors argue that,

although the British Army has both required and incorporated female labour since the seventeenth century, it has carefully distributed that labour to reflect dominant societal perspectives on the roles of women in any given historical period. Further, they argue, Army policy and gender discourses maintain identification of both soldiering and the Army as an institution as masculine (2007: 27).

Woodward and Winter see the “warrior-hero” as an “... extreme expression of hegemonic masculinity”²⁷ (2007: 61). Characteristics that have been attributed to the archetype of the warrior-hero include stoicism, rationality, “sexism, competitiveness and celebration of aggression and the domination of others...” (Hopton 2003: 119; Higate 2003a: 211). Woodward and Winter also point out, importantly, that military masculinity is most usefully approached as “... plural and diverse” and that the ‘warrior-hero’ is only one example among others that include, for example, peacekeeper, professional, clerk, cook, musician and various others (Woodward and Winter 2007: 61-63; Higate 2003b: 31). Further, military masculinities are produced and defined in relation to femininities, ‘the enemy’ (Woodward and Wilson 2007: 62), and civilians. Military masculinities are also changeable, situationally and over time. Nevertheless, in the context of, for example, British military masculinities, scholars acknowledge a hierarchy according to which, even among Army infantry, the experience of combat and combat-related roles are somehow perceived as more authentic (Woodward and Winter 2007: 63; Hopton 2003: 120; Higate 2003a: 211).

²⁷ According to Raewyn Connell, “to say a particular form of masculinity is hegemonic means that it is culturally exalted and that its exaltation stabilizes the gender order as a whole” at a particular time and in a particular location (2015: 147-148).

According to Woodward and Winter, in 2007, the vast majority of women in the British Army served in combat support units (i.e. artillery, engineering, signals, intelligence) or combat service support units (i.e. policing, logistics, personnel, medical) and the nearly one percent who did serve in combat units were with the Army Air Corps²⁸ rather than on the ground. The authors attribute the gendered distribution of roles in the British Army to policies and gender discourses that have produced and reproduced women's participation in the Army as alternatively limited by their physical strength or disruptive to unit cohesion (2007: 76). Consequently, they argue, the options for identification as women in the military in general, and the Army in particular, have been limited:

The discursive construction of male military masculinities, this continual process of affirmation of the connections between the male body, military participation and attributes identified and valorised as masculine, has enormous consequences for the subject position of military women because it shapes the availability and nature of the positions that it is possible to for those women to occupy (2007: 101).

Matsakis' perspective on the invisibility of American military women and veterans may therefore also be approached as resulting from historical limits placed on women's access to those contributions considered ideally military-like and veteran-like; specifically, contributions made through combat²⁹ on the ground (2007: 249-250).

²⁸ Women in the British Army were banned from combat roles in 2007, the year Woodward and Wilson's book (*Sexing the Soldier: the Politics of Gender and the Contemporary British Army*) was published. The ban was lifted in 2016 (2016: www.bbc.com).

²⁹ Women in the US Army were banned from combat roles in 2007, the year Matsakis' book (*Back From the Front: Combat Trauma, Love, and the Family*) was published. The ban was lifted in 2015 (Koren 2015: www.theatlantic.com).

As a result of the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal's ruling in 1989, all military occupations, including combat roles, became open to women—except for submarine service, which became open in 2001 (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 658; Higate 2003a: 205; 2014: www.forces.gc.ca). While the mandating of integration was being debated, some arguments against opening combat roles to women suggested that the integration of women would negatively affect military unit cohesion (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 651-652). According to these arguments, women were “not able to meet the physical requirements for combat, thus threatening the safety of the units they are in” (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 651). Other arguments against integration cited issues related to privacy. On field exercises and deployments overseas, for example, there was, “difficulty supplying separate latrines, showers and sleeping quarters” (2002: 663).

According to Winslow and Dunn, however, the issue with women in combat roles had less to do with either their physical strength or perceived special needs, and more to do with “the traditional ways in which men have demonstrated their masculinity” (2002: 650). The possibility of women serving in Army combat roles, argue the authors, threatened to disrupt the ideal type of (hegemonic) military masculinity (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 650). With integration, traditional ideas about military male-ness could no longer be defined in contrast to traditional ideals of female-ness.³⁰ Despite such arguments against integration, trials leading up to the tribunal, which examined the connections between the integration of women into all military roles and unit cohesion,

³⁰ According to Winslow and Dunn, traditional ideals about female-ness, in this military context, include the perception of women as, “the bearers, not the takers, of life, and as the embodiment of peaceful rather than aggressive qualities” (2002: 650).

showed that women in combat units did not degrade unit or mission effectiveness (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 651-652).

Referring to an American study, Woodward and Winter attribute the success or failure of integration to leadership approaches in a military unit, rather than socially-constructed gender binaries opposing, among other things, compassion and nurturing to aggression and killing:

Studies conducted for the US Department of Defense by the RAND Corporation, a research institute not known for its radical political views, concluded that gender differences did not erode cohesion; cohesion was high when people believed that commanders emphasized unity and the importance of the roles of all members in achieving mission success. Men and women can work together effectively in military units, the report argued, if women feel that they will be treated equally and if men perceive that women do not receive special treatment. Leadership is the key issue, rather than difference (2007: 55).

According to Winslow and Dunn, women integrating into the combat arms in the Canadian Forces nevertheless faced resistance, rooted in ideas about socially-constructed gender binaries, for at least ten years following the legislation of their integration (2002: 660).

In accordance with the notion that women in Army combat roles threatened the ideal type of military masculinity in the Canadian military, Winslow and Dunn note that, while some Canadian Forces leadership and personnel contested women in Army combat roles in the years leading up to and following integration, there was comparatively less resistance to participation by women in the Air and Sea Forces (2002: 248). My conversation with Quinn fell more or less in line with Winslow and Dunn's observations. Quinn began her military career in the early 1970s:

Karen: So it must have been relatively unusual—I'm assuming there weren't that

many women at the time?

Quinn: No, no. Very few, yeah.

Karen: So you were mostly...

Quinn: I generally look at it that way. You're a sailor, you're a sailor. No matter what.

Karen: Did it feel that way?

Quinn: Yeah, yeah. Every uh—most of the people I dealt with, you know, you cover their back, they cover yours. You know. That's what you're there for.

Karen: My impression uh quite a few years later, 2007ish when I was working with guys who were still in was that—and they were Army guys, infantry guys—was that for women, if you could do the job...

Quinn: There is no problem. Yeah. No, no. I've never—I personally did what I was supposed to do and everything else went fine.

Karen: Kind of a matter of competence?

Quinn: mm-hmm.

Karen: Well, and toughness?

Quinn: Yeah. Well and suck it up. Yeah.

In the veteran riding community, neither of the members I spoke to, who are also women, served in Army combat roles; however, both women were serving in the Canadian Forces when integration went into effect in 1989.

Historically, then, militaries in the US, Britain and Canada have contained women to support and service roles and resisted their integration into combat roles, in turn, limiting not only their options for identification as soldiers but also their opportunities to make and be acknowledged for the kinds of contributions deemed most authentic among military members; contributions made as Army combat personnel. Although Canadian

servicewomen have worked in combat zones in medical, intelligence and espionage roles in two World Wars, along with other forms of “irregular warfare,” and have been wounded, killed in action, and taken as prisoners of war, no woman had officially participated “as combat personnel in military assault units—ground, sea or air” until 2002 (Winslow and Dunn 2002: 641-642). I consider some veteran riding community members’ choice to wear ‘women are veterans too’ patches on their vests to also be decisions to mark their own military histories of relative invisibility. It also seems important to note, as does Matsakis, that the invisibility of military women’s experiences in combat zones also potentially renders invisible operational stress, or trauma, sustained by them in those combat-related experiences (2007: 249-250).

In this chapter, I have discussed the veterans riding community, which I refer to as the National Veterans Motorcycle Organization (NVMO). I have compared the NVMO to outlaw motorcycle clubs. I have discussed the organization and structure of the NVMO, as well as its mandate, and, the executive positions that veterans hold in the organization. I have also discussed the membership of the NVMO.

As the riding community was made up of both veteran and civilian members, I have demonstrated how the organizational structure of the NVMO unit managed this diversity by assigning civilian members the role of supporter. The NVMO unit with which I did my field research also included diversity amongst its veteran members. I have argued that veterans in the riding community operationalized differential access to the resource of intimacy to manage this diversity. Veterans with combat experience and who had sustained combat-related trauma tended to develop a high degree of intimacy with

other veterans who had experienced combat and/or sustained combat-related trauma. All veterans related to each other in other ways, however, including shared interest in motorcycle riding and participation in riding and remembrance events. Finally, drawing on Woodward and Winter (2007), and Winslow and Dunn (2002), I have linked traditional ideals about (hegemonic) military masculinity in the Canadian Forces to the historic and relative invisibility of military women and women veterans in Canada. I have argued that because Canadian military women and women veterans have historically faced relative invisibility compared to military members and veterans who were men, some veteran riding community members chose to mark their veteran-ness alongside their self-identification as women by wearing particular patches on their NVMO kit. I now turn this conversation to riding community members' experiences as Canadian Forces members who have retired from military service, and to the process of post-release displacement that I call release bereavement.

Chapter Five

The Processes of Post-Release Dis-emplacement: Release Bereavement and Interrupting Bodies

One of the earliest challenges I encountered during my field research was finding a way to conceptually approach veteran riding community members' post-release experiences in a way that could accommodate the range of experiences they described to me. For example, some veteran members self-identified as living with post-traumatic stress following their release, while others did not. During their military careers, some veteran members had served 'outside the wire'³¹ on Canadian operations overseas while others worked exclusively within Canadian military operations bases. I also spoke to a few veteran members who were never deployed outside Canada during their military careers. Nonetheless, across such diversity of experiences all their descriptions of the period of time following their military release had something in common: a sense of loss and isolation.

In 2013, Glenn, a veteran riding community member, posted to the riding community's Facebook page a link to an article. Although it was written by an American veteran, Glenn found it relatable and compelling enough to share with the rest of the membership. According to the author of the piece, many American veterans were not having trouble adjusting to life in civilian society exclusively as a result of trauma they might have experienced in combat. Rather, argues the author, most veterans suffered following their release from the military "because they remember what was good"

³¹ On operations, many Canadian infantry soldiers describe the area outside the relative safety of the military base camp or forward operations base as 'outside the wire.'

(Stajura 2013: businessinsider.com). Mike Stajura goes on to describe his perspective on how everyday life “hurt” following his military release:

Gone, suddenly, is the cohesive structure that existed to take care of you. Gone is that strong sense of social security. Gone is the sense that, wherever you go, you know where you fit. Gone are the familiar cultural norms. Gone are your friends from your ready-made peer group, who are just as invested in your success as you are in theirs (2013: www.businessinsider.com).

Collin Murray Parkes, a psychiatrist, has described grief as “an emotion that draws us towards something or someone that is missing” (1988: 54). It “arises from awareness of a discrepancy between the world that is and that ‘should be’” (Parkes 1988: 54). The more I spoke to veteran riding community members, the more their accounts of adjustment to life following their military careers reminded me of the processes of grieving. I came to conceive of veteran riding group members’ shared sense of loss and isolation following military release, so universally expressed yet quite diversely experienced, as a kind of release bereavement. As a concept, release bereavement usefully accommodates the varied range of both military and transition experiences described to me by veteran riding community members.

In this chapter, I address release bereavement in three parts. First, I discuss some relevant perspectives offered by anthropologists and other social scientists on bereavement, grieving and mourning. Following is discussion of some of the particular kinds of losses described to me by veterans; including, loss of kin, structure, purpose, lifestyle, and, to varying degrees of intensity, loss of ontological security. I also use Drew Leder’s concept of the dys-appearing body to approach the ways in which soldiers’ embodied skills, relevant and functional in military arenas of engagement, often became

dysfunctional in civilian arenas of engagement. Following Leder, I argue that experiences of dys-appearance are embodied expressions of loss. Finally, I discuss how a few veterans seem to have mitigated their own experiences of dis-emplacement by making particular choices, before and after their military release, about where to live and work. According to these veterans, the embodied skills they learned during their military careers helped prepare them for particular kinds of jobs following their release.

Release bereavement is a concept I am using to describe veterans' accounts of a period of time following the end of their military careers. The veterans themselves did not use this term. Throughout the chapter, I link the accumulated losses described by veterans—losses which inform the processes of release bereavement—to the uprooting of their senses of emplacement following their military release (Basso 1996). I call this array of circumstances a state of post-release dis-emplacement.

5.1 Bereavement, grief, and mourning

Because release bereavement is a process made up, in part, of the accumulation of losses, the emotions and behaviours connected to loss are relevant to its discussion. Especially relevant, therefore, is addressing the ways in which the processes of bereavement, grief and mourning differ. John O'Connor defines bereavement as a term used to describe “the period of time in which a person who has suffered the death of a relationship is actively dealing with the impact of the death” (1991: 260). In the context of the veteran riding community, I use the concept of release bereavement to mean the period of time in which a veteran is actively dealing with the loss of their access to military arenas of engagement.

O'Connor uses the word grief to describe "the process of thoughts, feelings, attitudes and psychological responses" that a person experiences during bereavement (1991: 260). Such thoughts, feelings, attitudes and responses may emerge in a person as "sorrow, anger, guilt or confusion" associated with the loss of a relationship to death (Counts and Counts 1991: 284). Individuals' grief responses during bereavement may also include withdrawing socially, lethargy, loss of appetite, difficulty sleeping, and depression (Counts and Counts 1991: 284). While various veterans I spoke with told me they had experienced some of these feelings and responses during their adjustments into civilian society following their military release, I think of grief in the context of release bereavement as reflecting losses specific to sense of place and the social processes of emplacement³² (Basso 1996; Casey 1996).

Whereas grief is experienced personally and potentially physically, mourning represents a public expression of grief in a way that is deemed appropriate, helpful, and healing for the bereaved (Counts and Counts 1991: 289; O'Connor 1991: 260). According to anthropologists David Counts and Dorothy Counts, mourning rituals "constitute the public face of grief" by channelling the personally experienced emotions and responses related to grief into a form that is both recognizable and acceptable to the members of a particular society (Counts and Counts 1991: 289). Mourning rituals are therefore meant to benefit both the bereaved and the members of social groups in the society to which the bereaved belong(s) (Counts and Counts 1991; O'Connor 1991; Eisenbruch 1984).

³² See Chapter One (section 1.4) for more detailed discussion of sense of place and the social processes of emplacement.

Anthropologists and other social scientists have argued that, cross-culturally, mourning rituals do social work in the contexts of protection, transformation, and reincorporation (Counts and Counts 1991; Eisenbruch 1984; Van Gennep 1960). In the context of protection for example, Counts and Counts suggest that by enabling the bereaved to publically express their grief, mourning rituals can help the bereaved to resolve their loss whilst also “preventing pathological responses to death” (1991: 290). Such responses can harm both the bereaved and the larger community. Pathological responses to death that are potentially harmful to the bereaved include the suppression, delay, or absence of grief which may become chronic, distorted or deteriorate into psychological and physical illness (Counts and Counts 1991: 290, citing Reid 1979; Baskauskas 1981: 284). Cross-culturally, public expressions of grief vary tremendously, from obligatory performances of self-mutilation for example, to the wearing of funerary black for a designated period of time following the death of a loved one (Eisenbruch 1984: 289-292). Examples from Canadian military contexts might include the acquiring of regimental commemorative tattoos or sewing the name of a fallen unit member (Army) onto one’s leather vest, an essential element of riding community members’ riding kit (Samuels 2009, field notes: November 2013).

O’Connor, a hospital chaplain, similarly maintains that the personal processes of grief alone are not enough: “All the private necessities of grief,” he argues, “may require expression if grief is to be resolved” (1991: 266). Through the public expression of grief, mourning rituals also (ideally) work to protect the community. Pathological responses to grief that can potentially be harmful to the community include: discernable or damaging

changes in the bereaved person's relationships to others, fury or hostility towards others, self-isolation, and behaviour that causes social or economic hardship on friends and family (Counts and Counts 1991: 290, citing Reid 1979).

In addition to their protective qualities, mourning rites, as public expressions of private grief, help the bereaved assume new social roles in relation to their loss (Eisenbruch 1984: 291). Widow, orphan and "childless person" are examples of some new roles that can result from the loss of relationships to death (Counts and Counts 1991: 291). Witnessing their expressions of grief, and recognizing the bereaved person's new status as a result of their loss, enables other members of a society to reincorporate the bereaved in their new roles. Moreover, in many societies, mourning rites are also meant to help the dead themselves assume new roles in relation to the community:

Mourning ceremonies should expedite the integration of the dead person into his or her new role, as the particular society understands it. Usually mourning rituals enable the spirit to enter the world of the dead, thereby permitting society and its bereaved members and the spirit of the dead to let each other go. They may, however, facilitate the transformation of the deceased and reintegrate the spirit into the society of the living... (Counts and Counts 1991: 291).

Beyond reincorporating the bereaved by helping them (and the deceased) transform into their new roles in society, properly—that is, ritually—saying goodbye to the dead helps a society that is adjusting to the loss of one of its members reorganize itself accordingly. Once again, there are protective elements (Eisenbruch 1984; van Gennep 1960; Turner 1967). As noted by Maurice Eisenbruch, the ritual expression of grief serves "the function of enhancing the solidarity of the group, which has come under threat by the death of one of its members" (1984: 289).

The re-incorporative and transformative work that mourning rituals do may be

relevantly applied to the resolution of loss in the context of release bereavement. In the NVMO, the relevant transformation was from soldiers who lost the military into veterans who gained a motorcycle riding community. Chapter Seven focuses in detail on re-incorporative and transformative rituals unique to the veteran riding community that I believe played a role in the resolution of some veterans' release bereavement. Relevant to the present discussion, however, are the connections between the absence of public rites that transform and reincorporate, and the processes of release bereavement and dis-emplacement.

5.2 Grief, unexpressed

It is helpful here to visit Arnold van Gennep's famous concept of rites of passage (1960):

The life of an individual in any society is a series of passages from one age to another and from one occupation to another. Wherever there are fine distinctions among age or occupational groups, progression from one group to the next is accompanied by special acts... Transitions from group to group and from one social situation to the next are looked on as implicit in the very fact of existence, so that a man's life comes to be made up of a succession of stages with similar ends and beginnings: birth, social puberty, marriage, fatherhood, advancement to a higher class, occupational specialization, and death. For every one of these events there are ceremonies whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally defined (1960: 3).

Central to van Gennep's concept is that transitioning from one social role into another causes changes that disrupt the everyday lives of both the individual and the society in which the individual is assuming a new role.³³ Rites of passage, argues van Gennep, are

³³ Van Gennep was referring to small-scale societies in which all members passed through many of the same life stages. The modern Canadian Forces and the small-scale societies van Gennep wrote about are certainly very different. However, all military members similarly pass through some of the same stages in their military careers. One relevant example is passage from civilian to soldier recruit, from soldier recruit to

therefore designed to mitigate the effects of such disruptive change through symbolic behaviour (1960: 13; Turner 1987: 4). They do so in three parts (although each part is not always equally important or developed to the same degree): rites of separation, rites of transition, and rites of reincorporation (1960: 10, 11). Separation marks an exit from a defined social role (Turner 1987: 4; Van Gennep 1960: 3). Transition is “liminal,” an ambiguous state of being wherein a person (or group of people) is neither exactly who they were before separation nor exactly who they will be following their reincorporation into the group (Turner 1987: 5). Reincorporation marks the conclusion of the passage; the person (or group of people) is in a “stable state once more” and ready to take on the responsibilities associated with their new role (Turner 1987: 5). The states of transition and reincorporation are particularly relevant to this discussion of release bereavement.

I approach riding members’ bereavement over the loss of their access to military arenas of engagement as simultaneously a state of liminality. As military members, many of them would have participated in existing symbolic behaviours of passage to mark their transformation from civilians into soldiers.³⁴ However, prior to military release, no similar formal or informal rites of passage were in place to help them separate from the military and pass into new, stable, and defined roles in civilian society. Mourning ceremonies

infantry soldier, and from infantry soldier to infantry soldier with tour experience (Samuels 2009).

³⁴ Existing symbolic behaviours which marked passage from civilian to soldier recruit in the Canadian Forces include formal graduation ceremonies upon completion of the basic military training course and, less formally, acquiring tattoos to mark completion of basic training. At Canadian Forces Base Wainwright in 2007, new soldier recruits often went to tattoo shops, sometimes together, to get tattoos to mark their completion of the course. It was also very common for soldiers to get regimental tattoos following tours of duty to mark their passage from soldier recruits to experienced soldiers (Samuels 2009).

allow bereaved individuals to pass from, for example, wife, daughter or father into widow, orphan or childless person before a community of others who understand the meaning of such transformation (Counts and Counts 1991). Neither ceremonies of passage to reorient them in society following their loss, nor any community to witness and understand the meaning of their passage (and their loss), were available for veteran riding community members following their release. No social body was available to witness their expressions of grief, either. Following work by Counts and Counts and O'Connor, these two elements of mourning rites—transformation and the public expression of grief—are essential to the resolution of grief (1991; 1991). My argument is that, without access to these essential tools for grief resolution, many individuals in states of being “not soldiers but not yet NVMO veterans” were trapped in a liminal state of unresolvable (release) bereavement; some of them, for decades.

5.3 Loss of place

One of the characteristics of place, according to Casey, is its capacity to gather borders (shared notions surrounding inside-ness and outside-ness), lifeworlds, memories, thoughts, and languages and hold them wholly in an arena of engagement (1996: 26). Clifford Geertz also reminds us that, while they are much more than geography only, arenas of engagement must exist somewhere (1996: 262). For example, Keith Basso has situated the experience, knowledge and systems of relation, history production, and co-community that make up Apache arenas of engagement (or place) on the particular landscape of an Apache reservation in Arizona in the 1980s (1996). In military contexts, such “wisdom” is situated on Canadian Forces Bases, Canadian Forces operations bases

inside and outside the wire, and other such geographic locations (1996). Upon their release from the military, however, and once again using Basso's terms, veteran riding community members' military wisdom had nowhere to "sit". I refer to their experiences of unseated or dis-configured wisdom as a state of dis-emplacement.

Various social scientists have examined grief in the context of dis-emplacement, particularly among refugee populations (Eisenbruch 1984; Munoz 1980; Baskauksas 1981; Parkes 1988). Liliana Munoz for example, who has written about Chilean political refugees who migrated to the UK in the 1970s, has argued that "the psychodynamics of exile is akin to that of bereavement, and must be understood in terms of loss followed by adaptation to the new environment" (1980: 231). It seems worth noting that, comparing the experiences of political refugees who were adapting to everyday life far from home and the experiences of former Canadian Forces members navigating the challenges of transitioning into civilian society requires a certain level of abstraction. Unlike political refugees, veteran riding community members usually chose when and how they retired, if some of them would have preferred the choice of staying in the military.³⁵ The political refugees Munoz wrote about had no such power to control the conditions of their exile. Also, veteran riding community members did not experience the urgency of political exile, or face potential physical harm done to themselves or their loved ones as a consequence of their military release.

The characteristics of the experience of grief in both contexts are nevertheless

³⁵ Wounded veterans could be medically released between six months and three years after their injury, or, after being diagnosed with an illness (2017: ombudsman.forces.gc.ca).

similarly described. Munoz identifies anxiety, “damage to self-concept,” a sense of “massive deprivation,” and a “profound sense of loss of security” including the emotional security of family and friends, and the sense of security derived from feeling competent in one’s assumptions and expectations regarding one’s own “culture” (1980: 231). Munoz also indicates a connection between the bereavement experienced by Chilean refugees as a result of their immigration and sense of place (Basso 1996):

The bereavement experienced by exiles may be interpreted as a result of loss of roots, the geography, the emotional support, the cognitive world and the status which they had enjoyed prior to exile. The social isolation resulting from the loss of friends and relatives is felt as particularly punitive (Munoz 1980: 231).

Parkes has argued that while more commonly recognized than others, loss of relationships to death is not the only kind of loss that can result in bereavement (1988: 55). His concept of “psychosocial transitions” (PSTs) addresses grief that can result from other kinds of losses (1988: 55). According to Parkes, psychosocial transitions occur when major life events, mass exile for example, jeopardize people’s assumptions about the world:

The internal world that must change in the course of a PST consists of all those expectations and assumptions invalidated by the change in our life space ... These expectations constitute part of an organized schema or ‘assumptive world’, which contains everything that we assume to be true on the basis of our previous experience... The familiar world suddenly seems to have become unfamiliar, habits of thought and behaviour let us down, and we lose confidence in our own internal world... Since we rely on having an accurate assumptive world to keep us safe, people who have lost confidence in their world model feel very unsafe... (Parkes 1988: 56-57).

In addition to jeopardizing people’s assumptive worlds, psychosocial transitions (PTSs) are characterized by Parkes as “lasting in their implications” and as “taking place over a relatively short period of time,” consequently leaving little opportunity for individuals to

prepare for the changes (1988: 55).

Following Parkes, Munoz's description of the loss of roots experienced by Chilean political refugees seems like an apt example of one kind of psychosocial transition. I approach veteran riding community members' experiences of dis-emplacement, from the perspective of psychosocial transition as well. What Parkes suggests is needed to mitigate the potential harmful effects of psychosocial transitions also has much in common with reincorporation rites: "emotional support, protection through the period of helplessness, and assistance in discovering new models of the world appropriate to the emergent situation" (1988: 59). However, following their military release, retired Canadian Forces members had no place—no arena of engagement capable of gathering their sense of emplacement—from which to seek the kind of social support, protection or assistance Parkes prescribes for resolving transition. Following Parkes, veterans were consequently 'stuck' in a non-place they experienced as unsafe (1984: 57); or, a state of ontological (or existential) insecurity (Giddens 1991; Jackson 2008). This discussion of psychosocial transitions, in particular as a period of grief over the loss of people's relationship to place, is meant to reiterate that release bereavement is about much more than retiring from a job. It is a period of grief connected to losing one's sense of emplacement, losing one's "assumptive world" wherein one's everyday ways of doing things and behaviours are both rooted and suitable.

5.4 State of dis-location

I met Nathan at the bar in Northeast Calgary where the riding community held their general meetings. That evening I was attending my first meeting. Earlier, the president at

that time had introduced me to the group and I briefly introduced my research project to the membership in attendance. After the meeting, adjourned people stayed to catch up with each other and then after a few hours they began leaving for home. I had decided to leave as well when Nathan stopped me on my way out. He wanted to know more about my research project and asked me to sit down and talk with him about it. So I did.

At that early stage in my research I was interested in the parallels between a soldier's military family and their civilian family,³⁶ and how circumstances in which both families intersect might be connected to a veteran's transition experiences following release. Nathan's reply carried a tone I had encountered a few times throughout the evening but had yet to think about in the context of release bereavement and dis-emplacement. "There is no intersection," he told me. "You go in the Army and you stay there. You can never really be a civilian again."³⁷ His comments aptly describe the displacing aspect of release bereavement, the experience of finding oneself 'stuck' in a state of unresolvable grief over loss of place. I discuss specific examples of loss of place in the context of release bereavement in three categories: social isolation, relating to processes of identification, and existential. These categories of loss are overlapping but for the sake of description it is helpful to dis-embed them.

The Chilean refugees Munoz wrote about were particularly troubled by the social isolation they experienced living in Great Britain and so far away from their friends and family (1980: 231). Veteran riding community members similarly talked about the

³⁶ By civilian family I mean people who are related to military members (for example, through biology, marriage or other forms of romantic cohabitation, and adoption).

³⁷ Nathan's comments here are paraphrased.

differences between soldiers and civilians in the context of social isolation; specifically, how they missed the sense of belonging and camaraderie they once enjoyed. In his comments below, William lends some insight into Nathan's perspective on the difficulties related to adjusting to everyday life among civilians after leaving the Army:

When you go in the military it's a different way of life. Now that, that's a huge transition. Because you spend all this time buildin' up you know, gettin' rid of that it's about me. It's about my team. And you actually develop like a brotherhood. And you're very protective of that brotherhood. You might not like the guy but you sure the hell will have his back. And they will have yours. And that brotherhood sense and belonging never goes away... and I know for me, when I left I missed that for years. I didn't have that. I didn't even have that with my friends.

William's comments elucidate what several veteran riding community members have told me was so jarring about (relatively) suddenly finding themselves living and working among civilians again. Using Parkes' terms, it was the collapse of their expectations and assumptions about the world (1988: 56-57). Colin aptly describes the sense of insecurity he experienced when he found his assumptions about the world to be no longer accurate:

Colin: When you're with the military, you've a tight knit group of people that trust each other with their lives. So you cooperate with one another. And you're best of buddies. You can tell them the deepest, darkest secrets and you know they're not gonna blab it around and start gossiping or anything like that. You're a tight bunch of guys. You depend on each other. I tried to bring that on civvie street and it's not the same. Everybody is kind of out for themselves. They'll backstab ya if they can. Gossip, blah, blah, blah. And I didn't realize that until it was too late and it hurt me really bad. And that's when I started drinkin' heavily and couldn't handle it...

Karen: Trying to wrap your head around what had happened to you with people who couldn't really understand?³⁸

Colin: Yeah. And uh trying to you know, trying to pretend these people could relate to you and you could work together and be tight like you were in the military. It's not the same. So they don't, they see you like you got two heads and

³⁸ Colin was deployed to the Balkans with the Army in the 1990s.

they're not there for ya.

William and Colin provide apt examples of very situated wisdom out of place (Basso 1996). In the contexts of everyday practical activity in the Army, it made sense for William and Colin to depend on their Army family to consider the welfare of the team before their own and be trustworthy. Their assumptive world could not be imported onto 'civvie street' however because people there had not spent 'all this time getting rid of it's about me' and making it 'about the team.' Consequently, William, and particularly Colin, describe a profound sense of deprivation and loss of emotional security; two aspects of bereavement over loss of place that are identified by Munoz (1980: 231).

Greg and Victor talk about deprivation in terms of loss of connection to others who share wisdom regarding the potentially intense experiences of deployment and being away from family for long periods of time. In his comments below, Greg compares the connection he felt with other veteran riding community members with what it was like for him before he joined the riding community:

It's important to me because I'm around people that I know. You know like, and that are, like they're—we all got our little stories. We all got our little thing [*but*] we have one thing in common. We served. We, we were in the military together... We've all put up with hardships, we've been away from our families, we've all come out of it unscathed, we've all you know made new lives for ourselves but we still always have that one connection. Uh, you come out here onto civvie street you have no connections. Because all these people you talk to they've been in the same place for a hundred and thirty thousand years. So they know all their classmates from—I don't know my class, I wouldn't know my classmates if they walked through the door...

Victor told me that he had difficulty connecting with his family and friends who had remained in his hometown while he went away to join the Army. Below, he talks about being at home on military leave while he was still serving:

My mother and my brothers and sister they, I'm sure they wondered a little bit what was going on. But even my friends and that, I mean, there was a little? That was often—you know we still got along and we still went out and did things but I was at—I had a different way from them... And they didn't understand, so... You know it didn't matter where you started I mean you lost them pretty quick. A lot of these guys never been out of [*names his old neighbourhood*] so how do you explain to them, you know, going through basic training even. Um because that's, that's a whole different lifestyle in itself and, and uh they didn't, they couldn't, they just couldn't understand. They couldn't get their heads around that so we just stopped and I'd go home and enjoy my leaves and have fun and then I'd go back and I was always really happy to get back to base. Get to back to guys that, that common, common ground that we had.

Following his military release, Victor missed the connection he shared with the 'guys' so much that he considered getting back in the Army:

I felt, I felt quite alone. Uh for a long time. Years not, not months. Thought very, very hard about getting back in for two or three years. Four years. And in fact you know even 15 or 20 years later I still regretted not, not staying in the military... I had a big window where I just didn't have anything you know.

Such lasting implications (Parkes 1988: 55) of sense of dis-emplacement were expressed to me by most of the veteran riding community members with whom I spoke. They measured their own periods of release bereavement³⁹ in years and often decades.

Several veterans also described wisdom out of place in the workplace as a source of frustration and social isolation following their military release. Gavin describes his first experiences working with civilians following his release as “an absolute shock.” He joined the Army as a teenager and told me that between the farm on which he grew up and worked, and then the Army, “I didn't know very much about civilians.” Following his release, “all of a sudden I'm thrown in with a bunch of civilian mechanics.” Gavin's

³⁹ As noted on page 155, release bereavement is a concept I am using to describe veterans' accounts of a period of time following their release from the military. The veterans who participated in my research did not use this term.

comments recall one of Parkes' characteristics of psychosocial transitions; that they take place over a relatively short period of time (1988: 55). Upon reflection years later, Gavin explained how he came to recognize that his own expectations and assumptions about work did not match those of the civilians with whom he was working.

Now, the equipment was basically the same, but dealing with these civilian mechanics was an absolute shock to me because none of them would follow instructions very well. They weren't military. They hadn't been trained as soldiers, so it was—it drove me crazy. I thought, these guys, they won't do what they're told. Or if they do what they're told, they didn't do it right or whatever. And maybe part of it was my problem because I thought that just because I—just because they didn't do it right didn't necessarily mean that it wasn't right in their opinion. Maybe it was just me who didn't quite understand what these guys were doing. But those first two or three years that I was out of the service drove me crazy. I thought how can anybody work like this? You know, without discipline, without organization, without order? Right? The military structure that I had, you know, didn't allow me to recognize that these guys were different. They weren't necessarily wrong, they were just different. And I had a terrible time accepting that.

Victor expressed his first civilian workplace interactions with similar frustration:

Oh! Working with civilians. Oh um very, I was very impatient. Um again, I was used to a disciplined lifestyle and civilians aren't. And so um getting, getting them to do the things you needed to do for—or even being, being involved with them. Trying to get something done was very difficult on me.

Greg talked about frustration regarding the “work ethics” he encountered in his first work experiences following release. “Everything you learned in there, when you come out it's not as usable on civvie street.” Particularly troubling for Greg were the different expectations the civilians he worked with adhered to regarding the quantity and quality of work:

I'd just keep working. My job is to finish the vehicle. So if it was coffee break and I didn't want to take coffee I would just keep puttering. I got shit for that. I says it's my coffee break I'll do what I damn well want. No, you have to stop. And then you see something wrong and say okay I need five more minutes to fix this...

No just, just do this and cover it up when we come back in we'll fix it again. It's not what I was taught. I was taught one time, fix it right. And it's not the way it works. My first job when I got out was working for uh [names company]. And I worked for them for about three months. I couldn't handle it. I couldn't handle the stupidity and I couldn't handle the way they worked. You know like, and the other thing is too is like, you go on a job. You finish it. And then these guys are like going out for a cigarette every five frikkin' minutes and you know like, oh yeah well I don't give a shit... Like their whole attitude sucks...

The frustrations these veterans have expressed regarding their encounters in civilian workplaces also imply a connection between situated wisdom and processes of identification. Dislocation of one was implicated in the dislocation of the other. We can further examine the implications of dis-placed wisdom on processes of identification, and what makes them so isolating, by drawing on certain perspectives on relatedness and mutuality of being (Carsten 2000, 2004, 2007; Sahlins 2014).

According to Marshall Sahlins, people who are kin to each other “are intrinsic to one another’s existence” (2014: 1). They participate in each other’s lives at life sustaining levels that render their existence inter-dependent. Their being is a state of mutuality:

Kinsmen are people who live each other’s lives and die each other’s deaths. To the extent that they lead common lives, they partake of each other’s sufferings and joys, sharing one another’s experiences even as they take responsibility for and feel the effects of each other’s acts. For another thing, mutuality of being has the virtue of describing the various means by which kinship may be constituted, whether natally or postnatally, from pure ‘biology’ to pure performance, and any combination thereof... (2014: 28).

Sahlins’ argument against historical perspectives on kinship in the social sciences, which constituted biological relation as “primary kinship,” draws on sense of place (2014: 73). Lifted out of one’s arena of engagement, he argues, a person has “no identity except a genital one” (2014: 12). Kinship then is generated in place, in contexts of “love and nurture,” sharing and eating food, working and living together, helping and supporting

each other, and “sharing the fortunes of migration and residence, as well as adoption and marriage” (2014: 28). This emplaced “mutuality of being” not only renders people related to each other, it situates them in a field of relations that brings a sense of identification with (and meaning to) that which they do together in their lifeworlds (2014: 1). Because mutuality of being creates kinship and operates in place, while people are in such a state of emplacement, they are what they do.

Writing about adult adoptees who decided to search for their biological parents, Janet Carsten has also argued that, “kinship is intrinsic to personhood” (2004).

Without knowledge of a birth mother, and to a lesser extent knowledge of a birth father, these people’s sense of self is apparently fractured and partial. And this suggests a notion of personhood where kinship is not simply added to bounded individuality, but one where kin relations are perceived as intrinsic to the self. It is precisely the sense that something was missing in their own personhood that is strongly articulated by those who have undergone searches for their birth kin (Carsten 2004: 106).

If kinship relations are both emplaced and “intrinsic” to processes of identification, it follows that a state of dis-emplacement, wherein one finds themselves isolated from their kin, might also affect “self concept” (Carsten 2004: 106; Munoz 1980: 131). The military veterans I spent time with considered themselves to be related to the soldiers with whom they had once served. Following Sahlins, they certainly participated in each other’s pre-release lives in intrinsic ways. Among other things, they lived, ate, worked, slept, washed, bled and sometimes died together. In the following exchange, for example, Victor describes how his sense of relatedness through mutuality of being made the processes of release quite isolating:

Victor: It makes it very lonely. Um I told you before it took me three or four years before I could finally uh assimilate I guess back into civilian life totally. It was, it

was hard to do because I was very attached to my, my military family. And um it kept coming up all the time. I mean it was always there in a lot of the things that I did. You know with my work, my social life. You know it was always a component. For a long time. But it was the same, it was the same—uh I think I assimilated a lot faster being in the military lifestyle and I had trouble with the family...

Karen: mom, dad, brothers, sisters—

Victor: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, they seemed more foreign than my military family...

Carsten relates adoptees' experiences of "fractured and partial" sense of self to the absence of their birth parents (2004: 106). Victor's comments, in which he ascribes a perception of foreign-ness to his civilian family, also suggest that he experienced a sense of fracture or partial sense of self in the absence of the military kin with whom he better identified. Because kinship exists exclusively in place, following Carsten, I too suggest that veterans' states of dis-emplacement following military release was sometimes damaging to their "self concept" (2004: 106). To reiterate, this impact has been identified by Munoz as a characteristic of bereavement over loss of place (Munoz 1980: 231). Among these veterans, processes of identification and self-conception operated (in place) in contexts of military kinship. However, partially because military veterans formerly worked with kin, they also (self) identified with the work itself. Veterans often expressed this to me in contexts of loss of a sense of purpose or duty following their release from the military.

In his comments below, William aptly describes the connection he perceived between kinship and self-identification with duty:

If you haven't served in the military, you don't know about it. You, you don't know that whole sense of duty and you know having you know your buddies' back and whatever. And you go through this as a team and it's, it's very odd to explain to somebody about it. But only military people know about it. Even their

[civilian] families don't. Like, you know. Um I could make that comparison. That transition. That yeah I would go away and miss my friends but if I—when leaving the Army I missed my, my Army boys. I missed the Army. That, that belonging more. For sure...

Paula expresses a connection between her own sense of worth and the sense of purpose she derived from her tour experience: "...since I came home last year, I would probably give anything to go back because its—like when you're over there, you feel like you're doing something, like you're accomplishing something, and there's a sense of worth..."

In his comments below, Warren also connects the work with his conception of himself.

Below, he compares how he spent his free time following his military release to how he spent his free time after he became a member of the veteran riding community:

I for years, I for years—and she'll tell you I still do but it's not even close. I for years hid behind a wall of dope smoke and crawled in a whiskey bottle. I would go to work and I would come home and I would not get involved with anything more than my immediate pastimes... When I found this group and I found the outlets of charity that we have. And the group of people that we have that for the most part seem interested... We do good work and it makes me feel good. And it makes me feel involved. And people say, several members have said it's not always about the patch but it is about the patch. It's about the work that we do and it's about the work that we're gonna do. And for that, we need to continue...

Stajura makes a similar argument, situating sense of purpose within an arena of engagement. My interpretation of his solution to the problem of social isolation for what I conceive of as dis-employed veterans, is for them to replace their lost sense of place with a new one:

I think that the social prescription for most Veterans facing challenges in civilian life—whether those challenges are PTSD or a lost limb or simply an inability to maintain steady employment—should be the same: find them a social network to replace the one they lost (2013: www.businessinsider.com).

As an example, Stajura cites his friend's decision to join AmeriCorps following her

release from the United States Marine Corps. His description fits in with this thesis' focus on re-emplacing experiences. Stajura argues that AmeriCorps offered his friend "three crucial things" (2013: www.businessinsider.com). These include "a new mission, a new purpose, and a strong, supportive social network in which people were actually invested in one another's well-being and success" (2013: www.businessinsider.com). In Chapter Seven I will argue that the veteran riding community offered similar opportunities to its veteran members, and further opportunities as well. My point here has been to address the importance of sense of purpose, and its loss, to processes of identification, release bereavement, and dis-emplacement among the Canadian Forces veterans who shared their post release experiences with me.

According to Munoz, Brazilian refugees in Great Britain experienced anxiety, which she has identified as a characteristic of bereavement in relation to loss of place (1980: 231). Veterans similarly described experiencing anxiety related to their transition experiences. I conceive of their descriptions in this context as loss of place experienced existentially. Usually, they expressed such encounters as experiences of "not knowing." Wade offers a compelling account of "not knowing" in the context of medical release:

I interviewed [*an officer*]... who'd come up through the ranks who was getting out of the military. Injured. And I was up in Edmonton with VAC and I interviewed this guy and I said, "when's your last day?" And he's like—"oh, we're on Monday." And he said, "Thursday." I said, "what are you doing on Friday?" He started to cry, he said, "I have no idea." He said, "I have no—wow." Like I can see it just hit him with this. And he goes—obviously it was right there and he lost it. He lost it. And I'm like, "holy shit." The not knowing is a huge issue. And I would say that a lot of these guys don't know. Because the information's not there or if it's there they choose to discard it, they choose not to read it, they choose not to understand it. They choose to listen to their peers who may not have the right message or the correct message or be on message. All they know is what they've heard from other people. So it's the morass that they just

keep piling themselves into. And can't get out of. I have no idea where this guy is today. He could be one of those suicide stats that no one tracks. Don't know. But it's very troubling... And so I would say that this transition that probably transcends everything is the not knowing. I even alluded to it, I was saying to my wife, "go find somebody in this hospital that knows something about administration and benefits and what's gonna happen." Because I had no idea. None. And as I, you know we had to peel the layers of the onion and find out what's going on, I realized that I'm done...

Unlike the injured officer he interviewed, when Wade was recovering in the hospital from the injuries he sustained on tour, he began to learn what he could about the medical release process, and formulate a time table for release on his own terms. Very much like the officer he interviewed, at first, he did not know what he was going to do. This situation of not knowing was an enormous and immediate source of ontological insecurity.

Veterans who were not medically released as a result of injuries sustained on tour also experienced uncertainty and anxiety in the context of existential loss of place.

Richard and Vera provide one example:

Vera: It was scary at first because—

Richard: Oh yeah

Vera: There goes our security, pay cheque you know that we—

Richard: Military is a—

Vera: Military is a very secure uh—

Richard: It is. This is what a lot of guys, a lot of guys that get out, they get out and they don't really have a plan. Or they get out unexpectedly or whatever. They go from a very, very secure environment um—

Vera: With benefits and everything—

Richard: Oh yeah. To you know having to do all the stuff on your own and not knowing for sure um—like our company recently we were uh, because of the

budget cutbacks and our contract might have been affected and the bunch of us, the guys I work with, we were thinking they, you know, are we going to have jobs in a few months? I never had to worry about that in the army. Now I know what it's like for guys—

Vera: that's why I kept asking you, are you sure you want to do it? Make sure you find out everything before you quit

Richard: And we went through a period of time there when I first got out, when I was still only working on a part-time basis. Uh where you know you don't have that regular pay cheque anymore I guess like I was saying regular sort of secure environment um—

Vera: Because that's all he knew in our whole married life—

Richard: Yeah my whole married life, that's all we know. It can be disturbing and I would say that for folks who don't have a plan, or folks who don't have a lot of um you know concept of the kinds of things you're going to have to deal with. Um it would be, it could be difficult...

Beyond the financial sense of insecurity, Gary described to me the trouble he had

adjusting to his provincial health care system as a former military member:

Oh my god it was like a nightmare when I first got out with some of the things that you just don't think about, especially being a single military person who, for their whole career, you go to the base hospital. If they need to send you to a specialist, they send you. You never get a bill. They got a pharmacy. You go to the pharmacy when a doctor gives you a prescription, you go to the pharmacy, you hand the paper to the guy and five, ten minutes later they call you back up to the wicket, you pick up the pills and you walk out. No money. So it's a big wake up call for a lot of military members if the release unit or the release centre of that unit that they're in doesn't give them a whole bunch of information... And if I think about it, realistically, the first few months that I was out of the military, the stress levels are probably astronomical when you do suddenly realize that all these things that you've been so used to having covered or taken care of or not an issue to get done, all of a sudden aren't... You go, holy shit, I don't have a doctor. And I can't find one... No doctors accepting new patients. I'm going to need a prescription. What am I going to do? Like, the military gave me three months of pills for after I got out, but once those three months was up, if I didn't find a doctor to get re-prescribed, I don't know what I would have done...

Anthony Giddens has argued that so long as everyday experiences provide answers to questions “about basic dimensions of existence, in respect of human life as

well as the material world,” everyday experiences remain anchoring (1991: 242). They anchor people, things and their shared environments inter-subjectively in place to create a sense of ontological security (Casey 1996; Giddens 1991: 242). Following their release, Wade, Richard and Vera, and Gary were anxious because their daily routines no longer provided answers to these existential questions. Specifically worrying, according to them, was ‘not knowing’ in contexts of financial and health security.

‘Not knowing’ (loss of ontological security), like the other losses that make up loss of place—unseated (or dis-placed) wisdom, loss of kin and loss of purpose—was displacing for some veterans. In this section I have discussed three aspects of dis-emplacement caused by release bereavement, including: social isolation, interruption to processes of identification, and existential insecurity. The next section takes up states of dis-emplacement from an embodied perspective.

5.5 Bodies out of place

As military members, the veterans I spoke with acquired numerous skills and habits through training and everyday practical activity among other service personnel. These skills and habits operated in a variety of ways: to maintain and reproduce the Canadian Forces’ combat readiness, to ensure properly functioning combat units on operations, and to maintain good morale at home and most importantly on deployment. In the 1990s, when most of the veterans who participated in my research project were still actively serving, Deborah Harrison and Lucie Laliberté identified combat readiness as the Canadian Forces’ “keynote preoccupation” (1994: 19). Combat readiness, according to the authors, is a principle based on the assumption that negotiations and alliances amongst

governments are fragile and unpredictable and that sometimes nations like Canada require the use of military force to uphold their interests (1994: 19). They define combat readiness as "... the doctrine that at a moment's notice a given quantity of person—and equipment—power must be prepared to fight" (1994: 19).

According to Harrison and Laliberté, because combat is an extremely stressful activity, the Canadian Forces' primary job must be to train its members for combat operations:

To do this work effectively, the military must inculcate both technical skills and the motivation to engage in combat, perform it effectively, and endure it until its end. The technical parts of combat are the results of training—in the skills and methods themselves and in responses that become so thoroughly ingrained that they will be automatic in any circumstance. (1994: 20).

In combat situations members are required to respond immediately to eliminate physical threat by simultaneously executing technical skill, "cool-headedness," and loyalty to their unit (1994: 20). According to the principle of combat readiness, Canadian Forces members are trained to carry out orders and tasks without asking questions, and adhere to a strong chain of command (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 21; Harrison 2002: 14). Finally, the authors argue that combat readiness requires the segregation of Canadian Forces members from civilian society because of competing ideologies regarding authoritarianism, individualism and violence (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 21; Harrison 2002: 14).

Following Harrison and Laliberté, then, combat readiness would have been woven into the field of relations that generated a sense of place among veteran riding community members while they were still serving. Skills, methods, and responses connected to

combat training, practiced over and over until they became “so thoroughly ingrained that they will be automatic in any circumstance” (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 20), were entirely relevant and functional in military arenas of engagement. Such skills were also, importantly, embodied. I connect the embodied and automatic nature of veterans’ military skills and responses to experiences of dis-emplacement upon their military release. For veteran riding community members in civilian arenas of engagement, I argue, their military training became not only dis-emplacing but sometimes also dysfunctional. Leder’s concept of the dys-appearing body is useful for examining the dis-emplacing quality of military training in civilian arenas of engagement.

According to Leder, when the body is functioning properly it tends to disappear from our explicit focus, taking on a supportive role in our encounters but in such an ordinary way that it falls into the background (1990: 26). Key to the body’s capacity to fall into such “background disappearance,” argues Leder, is its ability to incorporate new skills (1990: 26, 31). He describes the acquisition of a new skill in order to illustrate its connection to background disappearance:

The initial stages of mastering a new skill usually involve a complex series of thematizations. If, for example, I am learning to swim, I pay explicit attention to certain rules of performance. I am told to cup my hands, lift my arms from the water, and breathe to one side... As I try to swim I consciously monitor my own movements, making sure I am kicking and breathing correctly. The problematic nature of these novel gestures tends to provoke explicit body awareness (1990: 30-31).

Once the new skill is successfully acquired, however, after much practice and repetition, explicit body awareness during the execution of the skill fades away. “Once I truly know how to swim,” Leder explains, “I no longer need to think about cupping my

hands or the right style of breathing. This now comes without conscious effort, allowing my focus to be directed elsewhere” (1990: 31). The experience of explicit body awareness whilst performing the act of swimming, Leder argues, has disappeared into the background. Leder calls this process of skills acquisition “incorporation,” indicating the bringing of the skill into the body (1990: 31). A skill is incorporated when “... something that once was extrinsic, grasped only through explicit rules or examples, now comes to pervade my own corporeality. My arms know how to swim...” (1990: 31).

According to Leder, it is also through the process of incorporation that new skills settle into “fixed habits,” unreflective tendencies of the body to repeat particular and “ongoing patterns of action” such as getting dressed, for example, or getting ready for bed (1990: 32). Habits, like skills, disappear over time. They become “enveloped,” Leder explains, “within the structure of the taken-for-granted body from which” people “*inhabit* the world” (1990: 32). Recalling Harrison and Laliberté’s perspective on the “ingrained” and “automatic” operation of Canadian Forces members’ military training, I suggest that the veterans I spoke with similarly incorporated military skills and habits within their bodies throughout their Canadian Forces careers (1994: 20), enabling both the explicit awareness of the performance of those skills and habits to fall into background disappearance, and, the reproduction and maintenance of ready and effective combat units; what the authors refer to as, combat readiness.

Also, beyond the process of acquiring new skills, the body “manifests as a problematic or disharmonious thing” when it is in a state of pain or disease (1990: 70). Under such circumstances, argues Leder, the body *dys*-appears (1990: 70). Leder uses the

suffix, ‘dys,’⁴⁰ to indicate a reversal of background disappearance (1990: 86). Here the body is appearing when it should not be, demanding attention and indicating “breakdown or problematic performance” (1990: 83). These two words, disappearance and *dys*-appearance, therefore have an “antonymic” relationship in the context of Leder’s argument (1990: 86). Leder describes a tennis player who experiences a heart attack during a tennis match to demonstrate this relationship (1990: 74). While their body is functioning properly, Leder explains, the tennis player remains focused on the ball and the game. Incorporated skills are in use and simultaneously absent from the tennis player’s explicit awareness. Their body is in a state of “background disappearance” (1990: 26). Once the tennis player begins feeling chest pain, however, their attention is called away from the game and focused instead on their body’s sudden (and unwanted) appearance in their field of awareness (1990: 73-83). Now the tennis player’s body has *dys*-appeared.

Experience of a body in *dys*-appearance is both disruptive to one’s lifeworld and isolating (Leder 1990: 74). Once Leder’s tennis player experiences their heart attack, for example, they cannot continue the match; moreover, it will likely be weeks or months before they may play tennis again if at all (1990: 74). According to Leder, there is also a social aspect to the *dys*-appearing body. He returns to the experience of the tennis player to demonstrate:

As the world of the game is disrupted, so is the connection with another. A moment before the two players were bound together. They shared the court, the flight of the ball, the wind, the joy of effort and competition. Their thoughts

⁴⁰ Leder uses the Greek suffix ‘dys’ to indicate the “bad, hard” or “ill” appearance of the body in the mode of *dys*-appearance (Leder 1990: 87).

intertwined around the goal of victory, the mutual anticipation of each other's strategy. But pain strikes one alone. Unlike the feel of the cool wind, pain is marked by an interiority that another cannot share (1990: 74).

Physical pain, then, is but one experience capable of pulling the body into a mode of dys-appearance. Dys-appearance may also occur in contexts of physical or cultural difference (Leder 1990: 97). Kaplana Ram offers an example of this relationship between difference and dys-appearance of the body. The encounter she describes took place at the opera:

It is not the culturally and intellectually elaborated forms that matter most when one is radically displaced but the most quotidian and inconspicuous aspects of everyday. For a new migrant, as I once was, it was not the opacity of opera music that presented an obstacle as much as the regions of silence that settled around faces and bodies, as my body ceased to elicit appropriate facial expressions and gestures from those around me, and their expressions and gestures in turn often appeared drained of significance (2015: 36).

Ram's experience of explicit awareness of her body in the context of others' scrutiny can be approached as an example of what Leder has called social dys-appearance (1990: 96). As shown by Ram, like modes of dys-appearance that are called up through pain or disease, the experience of social dys-appearance too is isolating (and dis-emplacing). Further, Leder argues that similar to skills and habits, interactions with other people may be incorporated (1990: 94). For example, in contexts of "mutual incorporation" people communicate with each other successfully, share an experience, and all parties participate in the interaction as co-subjects. The parties are not self-conscious whilst enjoying one another's company (1990: 95). In contrast, when social dys-appearance occurs, such "communicative sociality" is denied (1990: 94). Consequently, one (or more) of the parties becomes self-conscious; they experience the encounter as the object of others' scrutiny rather than as co-subjects (1990: 96). As we know from Leder, dys-appearance

occurs when the body is called away from the non-problematic state of background disappearance. In contexts of social dys-appearance:

... This split is effected by the incorporated gaze of the Other. But not just any gaze will bring about such a rupture; it is the objectifying gaze that refuses cotranscendence. As long as the Other treats me as a subject—that is, experiences *with* me... the world in which I dwell, mutual incorporation effects no sharp rift. But it is different when the primary stance of the Other is highly distanced, antagonistic, or objectifying. Internalizing this perspective, I can become conscious of myself as an alien thing. A radical split is introduced between the body I live out and my object-body, now defined and delimited by a foreign gaze (Leder 1990: 96).

According to Ram's example her body dys-appeared, in part, because it was outside of a place that was well known to her (Jackson 2008: 18). Her skills and habits related to experiencing the performance did not match the skills and habits of most of the opera attendees. Consequently, she experienced their scrutiny as objectifying, which in turn made her self-conscious. Her description also implies a power dynamic at play in her encounter at the opera. Michael Jackson's perspective on the connection between habits and place helps to illustrate the role of power in such encounters. As an example, Jackson argues that although Aboriginal people in Australia have every legal right to enter public spaces, such spaces often make them uncomfortable because they are inhabited by white Australian ways of doing things (2008: 20):

Perhaps one should draw a distinction between *being* ostracized and *feeling* ostracized. The habitus of the hospital, or the Katherine camping-ground, or The Granites mining complex, made Aboriginal people uncomfortable, not because anyone was unkind or unaccommodating, but because the habitus was foreign to them. Because white habitus is the dominant habitus in contemporary Australia, Aboriginal people find themselves on the defensive, aware that they cannot enter this world on their own terms, and deeply ambivalent about their ability to cope in it, despite the prevailing pluralist ethos to which most Australians pay lip service (2008: 24).

In these examples, "dominant habitus" informed one way in which power relations

manifested in place; disrupting the possibility of “communicative sociality” between Ram and the other opera attendees, and, between Aboriginal people and white Australians (Jackson 2008: 24; Leder 1990: 94). Following Leder and Jackson, then, when people find themselves out of place, where their skills and habits are not the dominant way of doing things, they may incorporate others’ “alien gaze”; which may, in in turn, provoke their bodies to dys-appear (Leder 1990: 90).

While I will not suggest that veteran riding community members, as a group, experienced the kind of power differentials lived by refugee or immigrant populations or Aboriginal people in Australia, many of them did express an understanding gap when it came to their communicative sociality with civilian Canadians. Veterans often told me they did not ‘fit in.’ For example, as part of our conversation about the veteran riding community, Warren told me:

The civvies don’t get us... They don’t. And I hate to say that. They care about us. They do. They care about us. They care about the guys that are serving. They don’t get us... They don’t get livin’—it’s so hard to explain. I lived in a room with 54 other men. And I was one of the four youngest guys in the mess. So your hookies and your master hookies⁴¹ and stuff, they rule the roost. And if you were sittin’ in the settee and playin’ cards and they wanted to sit in the settee, they’d kick your ass out. So you moved. It’s just what you did.

Warren’s comments provide an example of Canadian Forces members’ incorporation of the “strong chain of command” (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 21). According to Warren, civilians do not understand the habit of more junior non-commissioned members to automatically give up their seat for more senior non-commissioned members because

⁴¹ I believe that Hooky and Master Hooky, as Warren has used it here, is Navy slang for Leading Seaman (LS) and Master Seaman (MS), the most senior of the junior non-commissioned member ranks in the Canadian Forces Navy. LS and MS are equivalent to Corporal and Master Corporal in the Canadian Forces Army.

they do not live within a military hierarchy. Consequently, Warren expressed his perception of a sense of distance between himself and civilian Canadians. Like Ram and Jackson, Warren's comments help demonstrate the significance of adding the notion of place to Leder's concept of the dys-appearing body. This relationship between place and dys-appearance informs my argument that veterans experienced dys-appearance when they performed incorporated (military) skills and habits in arenas of engagement where the "dominant habitus" was civilian (Jackson 2008: 24).

I have categorized such military skills and habits that veteran riding community members told me 'don't fit' on 'civvie street' two ways: skills and habits related to vigilance (in combat situations), and those not related to vigilance. The Canadian Forces' primary "preoccupation" with effecting combat readiness, according to John Whelan, involved honing serving members' bodies into "prepared alertness" (Harrison and Laliberté 1994: 19; Whelan 2016: 10). The incorporation of prepared alertness involved learning to continually push oneself to their physical and mental limits, "to harness adrenaline surges to remain alert and focused," and "to control the physical body so that it reacts instinctively and instantly" in stressful and dangerous situations (Whelan 2016: 250). Such reactions, for Whelan, became automatic and "hard-wired," and while they were necessary for regular training exercises and deployments, they were less often relevant in civilian society (2016: 16). Gregg offers some compelling examples of his own hard-wired, prepared alertness reactions to particular sounds. In his comments below, he also describes how his body automatically reacted to encounters with civilians; including his wife, and people he did not know:

One time [*names his wife*] and I were walking down the street and a car backfired. I grabbed her and threw her down on the ground. And she looked at me and I went, oh crap. Like I didn't, I felt embarrassed but I didn't you know. Because for so long it was bred into me. Hear the sound, hit the ground. And it's like, and when you come home. Oh. First night in bed with her whether she reaches and just touches me. I come out of that bed so fast I bounced off the wall. You know. I—didn't dawn on me I was still in my own room. So when I used to come home I used to actually sleep downstairs for a while. Or I slept somewhere else. For the first couple of nights. You know. Or I'd fall asleep upstairs in bed and she'd leave. Because any sound, anything, just fired me off. And takes a while to get back to being normal... People think you can just mould back into cutting grass. Well you can't. Someone's lawnmower backfires and shakes ya. The grass, walking down the street. You walk down the street even here and all of a sudden you look at a bunch of East Indians coming at you and you're just, you're just—like, tight. You know you're trying to move over, away from them. They're not doing you harm but you can't get out of your mind...

Greg's description of his body's reactions to noises and people demonstrate how military skills, 'bred into' serving soldiers for efficiency in combat situations, can provoke experiences of dys-appearance when soldiers are living in civilian society. Ian and his wife Amber similarly explained how prepared alertness, out of place, provoked the dys-appearance of Ian's body. Ian served in the Balkans in the early 1990s:

Ian: I couldn't walk on grass. Um because that's one of the, you know, big things you look for—is where's the minefield. You're so totally focused on stuff like that. So I mean Amber would, or I mean [*names their child*] would run across the grass, I couldn't chase after [*them*]. I, it just, like someone put a wall up in front of me and stuff like that, right?

Amber: That took months

Ian: Yeah

Amber: Months that, to get more comfortable.

Another example of incorporated skills and habits that may provoke veterans to experience the dys-appearance of their bodies is what Greg refers to as 'watching':

... It's still—even today, if—I mean I've been out for a few years and it clicks in me when some things happen. I'm still watching. When I'm around people I'm always watching around. See what they're doing. I don't know why but its just there, bred into ya.

Whelan describes this lasting mode of 'watching' as "situational awareness" (2016: 18).

Situational awareness, according to Whelan, always occupies a part of many veterans' minds with watching and calculating risks; regardless of what else they happen to be doing (2016: 18). "We carry it without even realizing," notes Whelan (2016: 18).

Raymond provides an example. He called it his habit to be aware of the people in the coffee shop in which we were sitting, along with what was happening outside:

I'm still guarded. Everywhere I go I'm alert of what's happening around me. I knew he was comin' [*a man who passed our table*] before he got to where he was. And when he slowed down and was walking very slow that's when I turned my head because I couldn't figure out why he was going so slow. So you know I understand everything. You notice I sit with my back against the wall with open vision of everything. That's habit. It's habit to look for the place that I'm comfortable... You know I sit here in the corner and I can see everything and hear everything and I'm talking to you but I heard the click of the door—you know, before that door opened I heard the click and knew exactly what was happening. So you probably, first time you noticed that somebody was coming through was when the door started to open. I noticed when I heard the click of the door handle. So I'm very guarded. You know I watch everything that's going on around me. I can tell you the colours of the cars... as they go by. That's what I've done to be comfortable where I go.

Zoe too spoke to me about the honed habit of situational awareness, and how the habit can sometimes draw the attention of others. She described a kind of secondary experience of dys-appearance whilst trying to find a seat in a restaurant with her partner, a veteran.

She and I also met in a coffee shop:

...If we go to a restaurant, he has to sit with his back to the wall. He has to be able to see the whole restaurant. He uh, like he wouldn't sit where I'm sitting right now he'd have to sit on that side of the table. We've actually had to ask to be moved in

a restaurant...

According to other veterans I spoke with, the habit of situational awareness has intruded upon further experiences of everyday activity in Canada. Examples, according to Paula, include driving or shopping at the mall:

When you come home, everything is—like you're just—like the routine over there and getting adjusted back to this life here, like driving again. Because over there you can only drive like 15 km an hour on the camp in KAF⁴² and it's all dusty, it's all dirty, and you're always, like hyper-vigilant about what's going on and, like, the rockets and—it was different. Like I found like the first little while just even going into malls I would be, like, just—I didn't like people too close...

Prepared alertness and situational awareness are examples of skills and habits related to vigilance. Functional and appropriate in military contexts, they were disruptive and sometimes even dysfunctional when performed whilst walking, driving, cutting the grass, dining out or even sleeping in Canadian civilian environments. While describing such everyday encounters with civilians, Greg, Ian, Zoe,⁴³ and Paula expressed their sense of not 'fitting in' on 'civvie street' as directly related to the 'bred in' quality of military skills and habits. It seems important to note here that, overwhelmingly, examples of prepared alertness and situational awareness were described to me by veterans who also self-identified as struggling with operational stress injuries (OSIs), including post-traumatic stress disorder. Veterans who were apparently not living with operational stress injuries also experienced dys-appearance, however. This is one of the reasons why I have found release bereavement to be a useful concept. By approaching the dys-appearance of military skills and habits as a symptom of release bereavement, I can include experiences

⁴² Paula is referring to Kandahar Airfield, in Afghanistan.

⁴³ Zoe was a civilian member of the veteran riding community. Her spouse was a veteran member.

of dys-appearance described to me by veterans who deployed on operations outside Canada along with the experiences of veterans who did not. Accordingly, military skills and habits not related to vigilance also provoked experiences of dys-appearance; and among almost all the veterans with whom I spoke. Examples of these skills and habits include getting dressed, the use of humour, swearing, and ‘partying’.

In his comments below, Greg explains how getting dressed in the Army became incorporated as a habit and how picking out civilian clothes has drawn the scrutiny of others, provoking an experience of dys-appearance among civilians where it never did in the Army:

... Getting back on civvie street, well I found the hardest part was getting dressed. Well it is! You don’t know what to wear. For 30 years you get up, you put on uniform of the day—is dress combats or things or whatever. You know exactly what you’re wearing. And it’s ready. You get up in the morning it’s like what the hell am I going to put on today? Jeans again? ... It takes a while to learn all this again. You know. Kids laugh at me, [*names his wife*] laughs at me. Like, you wearing that again? I’m not supposed to? No, change your pants. Okay...

Richard, who spent a total of 38 years in uniform, told me the same. As a retired veteran, he now had “to decide what clothes to put on in the morning... that’s hard.” Perhaps less an example of dys-appearance and more an example of its potential anticipation, below, William talks about the persistence of incorporated habit. He told me that he felt uncomfortable dressing too much like a civilian because of his time in the Army. At his civilian job, he told me,

Boots are polished, my uniform is pressed. Where everybody else’s looks like a bag of crap but they don’t have that sense of pride and honour and duty and I do. Doesn’t make me better it’s just that’s the way I know things [*the Army way*]. And it makes me feel uncomfortable. I can’t even grow my hair long because it makes me feel uncomfortable to do that. So I always keep it short, right? Just even like little things like that sound ridiculous but it’s so true.

As has been discussed by Harrison and Laliberté and Whelan, the skills and habits incorporated by active Canadian Forces members during training operate to maintain a combat-ready force. Importantly, they also operate in a social context: the cohesive primary military group.⁴⁴ According Morris Janowitz and Edward Shils, if a primary military group provides soldiers with their basic needs for food, supplies, “affection and esteem from both leaders and peers” as well as some sense of power, individual soldiers’ self-concern will be replaced by concern for the group (1975: 177-220). Cohesiveness, in this context, has been defined as “the degree to which mechanisms of social control” in a primary military group maintain social relationships that are “necessary to achieve” the group’s purpose (Siebold 2000: 18). The mechanisms of social control, according to Guy Siebold, involve: structural rules related to Army law and regulations, processes of identification and socialization, group goals and purpose, and, habits. So, in a cohesive military group, the group is simultaneously perceived as coming before the individual member, and, as a source of power for the individual member (2000: 18). Individual members derive a sense of power from the incorporation of military skills and habits in the company of other soldiers, which generate confidence, mutual trust, and a sense of teamwork and purpose (2000: 11). Siebold identifies three components of primary military group cohesion:

Each component is conceived of having an affective (emotional or feeling) and an

⁴⁴ The primary military group is a term used by Janowitz and Shils to describe the smallest social unit providing for a soldier’s basic physical and emotional needs. The authors identified the primary military group at the level of the section or platoon (Janowitz and Shils 1975). In the Canadian Army, a section consists of about eight to ten soldiers. A platoon consists of three sections.

instrumental (action or skill) aspect. The components of small unit cohesion listed with their affective and instrumental aspects, respectively, are (a) horizontal cohesion—peer bonding and teamwork; (b) vertical cohesion—leader caring and leader competence; and (c) organizational cohesion—pride and shared values, and attainment of needs and goals (2000: 19).

Following Siebold, we might approach skills and habits such as prepared alertness, situational awareness and even regulation dress (proper uniform worn properly) as instrumental aspects of cohesion. Correspondingly, Eyal Ben-Ari and Liora Sion's perspective on humour in two reserve units in the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) may be approached as an affective aspect of cohesion.

According to Ben-Ari and Sion, humour was crucial to the creation of “an ambiance of fellowship” among cohesive primary groups of Israeli Defense Force reservists (2005: 661). Usually in the form of often-repeated stories, teasing, and jokes, the authors argue that humour functioned (at least) three ways in the generation of primary military group cohesion: to relieve boredom, to assert power, and to cope with stress (2005: 658-663). Telling funny stories and joking around, the authors argue, rendered more enjoyable the strenuous and tedious tasks that made up a large part of everyday life in the Israeli Defense Force (2005: 658). In addition to helping soldiers to simply enjoy themselves, Ben-Ari and Sion suggest there were physical benefits:

The sheer physicality involved in laughter—including changes in breathing patterns, explosive exhalations, and vigorous thigh slapping—enables the bodily discharge of strains and stresses... In this case, the release afforded by specific jokes fuses with the release from the more general drudgery of army life (2005: 659).

Soldiers also jokingly complained about and criticized, for example, their crowded living quarters, the quality of the food they were given and other physically uncomfortable

conditions of service. Because humour is generally considered “not serious,” they could usually voice such dissatisfaction without fear of being reprimanded by their commanding officers (2005: 658-660). The authors approach this use of humour as a kind of safety valve. It allowed soldiers a sense of control over the physically uncomfortable conditions they shared whilst also creating the language for expressing it. The shared experience of discomfort simultaneously bonded them as soldiers, helping the Israel Defense Force fulfill its purpose of generating cohesive combat groups (2005: 669). Lastly, soldiers used ‘gallows’ humour to cope with the fear they shared of dying in dangerous combat situations (2005: 663). Expressing their shared apprehensions by making jokes about dying further bonded them as a group.

Beyond relieving boredom, asserting agency, and coping with stress, Israel Defense Force soldiers used humour to negotiate contested social space and create boundaries. According to Ben-Ari and Sion, “masculine,” sexist, racist, and homophobic humour in the IDF reserves was used to express contested social space among competitive men:⁴⁵

Jokes about women and homosexuals... often involve saying things about relationships between heterosexual men in military organizations... In these cases male sexual prowess (*vis-à-vis* females), the inferiority of the female in social positions, and homosexual traits are used as a means to discuss the relative standing and relations between men. Despite the emphasis on camaraderie, underlying much of the dynamics of the two units is a strong undercurrent of constant competition over dominance and submission (Ben-Ari and Sion 2005: 667).

The authors suggest such use of humour may have enabled competitiveness among soldiers to be relatively safely released, generating cohesiveness.

⁴⁵ The units Ben-Ari and Sion discuss in their paper were made up exclusively of men.

The salience of humour is not one of equality, but rather of shared vocabulary and shared experiences. Along these lines, humour as an element in the creation of a ‘solidarity of warriors’ (akhvat lochamim) both produces a language common to soldiers in general and to combat troops in particular; and blurs the differences between them while underscoring the boundaries between them and other groups (2005: 667).

According to Ben-Ari and Sion, then, making fun of each other, and of Others, in this particular way helped create solidarity in the units.⁴⁶

My point here is that like the incorporated instrumental aspects of cohesion discussed above (i.e. skills and habits related to vigilance), the incorporated habit of military humour too provoked experiences of dys-appearance among veteran riding community members. For example, during our conversation about the riding community, Greg addressed humour as one reason he found it so refreshing to spend time with other veterans:

It just makes me feel good. It’s just a good feeling. I like riding with them, shooting the shit with them. I know, it’s funny but you know, like I can joke. We can joke to each other? And we don’t take it personal. Like I can joke with Vince about certain things and Glenn, and they know I’m kidding. Where on civvie street they would take offence of it. You know? And it’s, it makes so you can relax and have fun and you know have a few beers, shoot the shit and do dumb things but you know in the end they got your back.

My interpretation of Greg’s comments is that he sometimes worried that, since his military release, his use of humour—‘bred into’ him and so important to the

⁴⁶ Also see Gluckman (2004) and Willis (1977) for their earlier discussions on the relationship between expressions of rebellion, resistance, and the denigration of particular groups of people, and, the creation of social cohesion. Writing about “the South-Eastern Bantu of Zululand, Swaziland, and Mozambique” in South-East Africa in the 1960s (Gluckman 2004: 178) and working-class high school boys in a town in central England in the 1970s (Willis 1977), the authors show how such expressions of rebellion, resistance, and denigration reinforced and reproduced systems of institutional power, rather than changed them.

establishment of cohesive primary military groups in the Canadian Forces—may have been misunderstood by civilians, or perceived by them as unusual or offensive.

In addition to jokes, veterans included swearing and partying as behaviour which civilians ‘don’t get’; or, as I am referring to it, behaviour that provoked experiences of dys-appearance in civilian contexts. As with humour, social scientists have discussed a cohesive quality to swearing in the Army (Hockey 1986; Elkin 1946). For example, John Hockey describes how the use of profanity among British Army recruits in the 1980s became incorporated as habit in military training, and often functioned to distinguish soldiers from civilians:

Swearing is indeed a generalized practice with obscene terms being often used in ways more or less devoid of their sexual meaning. Thus, ‘fuck’ can be used positively, negatively, or neutrally; as an adjective, noun, verb, or expletive. Recruits as they assimilate the Army’s jargon and argot also pick up and use obscene terms; real soldiers after all are expected to swear! The wholesale use of such language, taboo in much of civilian life, reinforces and symbolizes their new status as soldiers, constituting a release from certain restraints in wider civilian culture (1987: 36).

Canadian recruits similarly learned to swear, and to do so prolifically. However, as Victor told me, use of profanity, “a most significant portion of the soldier’s language,” outside the Army could provoke experiences of dys-appearance. (Elkin 1946: 414):

Victor: When I come home I had a difficult time talking to my parents. You know every second word was—

Karen: *laughs*

Victor: And uh I thought nothing of it and they were sitting there just totally shocked about it.

By ‘every second word,’ Victor is referring to the term ‘fuck’. Frederick Elkin has suggested the perception of a connection between masculine virility, strength, and the use

of sexually profane language among American soldiers (1946: 418). Regardless of whether the term is used according to its literal meaning, he argues, its use by soldiers was meant to connote hyper-masculine strength (Elkin 1946: 418); an image that has been fostered by military institutions in the UK, the USA, and Canada to facilitate the deployment of violence (Hockey 1986: 36).

According to Hockey, one way British soldiers managed the physical discomfort, stress, and potential danger of training and operations was by talking about the fun they were planning to have together when they were eventually released on leave. Among British privates, such “blow outs” involved heavy drinking, picking up women in bars, and sometimes getting into brawls with civilians (1986: 112-118). Based on stories I heard recounted, and on my own conversations, Canadian Forces members often enjoyed “blow outs” as well. Upon release from the military, however, the habit sometimes provoked experiences of dys-appearance.

While I was doing my fieldwork, veterans mostly ‘partied’ or ‘lived it up’ on special occasions including Remembrance Day or NVMO gatherings. Heavy drinking certainly played an important role in ‘partying’ for members of the veteran riding community and veteran members did occasionally get into fistfights with each other, although I never saw (or heard about) veterans brawling with civilians. ‘Picking up women’ did not appear to be anyone’s focus at the Remembrance Day events or the gatherings I attended, except perhaps for one or two members who were not married. A few wives who were also civilian members attended these events, but most wives did not; and based on my observations, those who did attend usually spent most of their time with

other wives. According to William, this arrangement was for the best:

William: They have to keep them separate because they start crossing over it might 'cause a lot of, I don't know, not confusion but differences and whatnot. I don't think they blend very well. Um because like I say you can act one way in the military but you can act a different way in civilian life. You start mixing the two and they might you know *[laughs]* complement, they would not compliment each other well. That's just my, you know...

Karen: Right, right. So some of the ways that you can relax—

William: Exactly! You can relax better without the stresses. Exactly. Because you see, I don't know, you haven't really seen us all go out and live it up. Really. We've been pretty tame for a few years now. But we have gone out and lived it up and arggggh whatever, right? And families don't come out for that. It's just us and our unit... And I've heard like you know that some of the families... Because of what we used to do in the *[names the veteran motorcycle unit]* and what we don't really do that much anymore living it up and going out and blah, blah, blah, blah. Some of the members' families have actually, were not putting up with that.

According to William, while 'living it up' was very normal and appropriate in the Army, it was not welcome in certain civilian places, particularly with some of the family members.

Hockey argues for a cohesive element to 'partying' among British soldiers (1986: 118-120). He suggests that collective drinking and aggression, towards other soldiers or towards civilians, was regarded by the British Army as an institution as a "positive force":

Brawling with civilians or other troops involves toughness, aggression, and the practice of violent skills. In addition, such occasions also demand solidarity in the face of opposition. Regardless of whether privates are fighting against another Army unit or the bouncers in a local disco, social cohesion tends to be generated during such occasions, loyalty is tested; in official parlance, 'the team spirit is enhanced' (1986: 119).

Hockey's perspective on cohesion here demonstrates how 'partying' could become incorporated as a habit among soldiers: it is an activity that helped generate primary

military group solidarity, vital to maintaining combat readiness. However, to further discuss why, as a habit, it persisted among veteran riding community members after their retirement it is also helpful to consider the connections between ‘partying’, stress and loss. As I have argued, the processes of release bereavement, the losses, are displacing. As serving Canadian Forces members, ‘living it up’ is how soldiers learned to handle stress and to relax their vigilance. I believe that following their release they sometimes coped with stress related to release bereavement the same way. Below, William goes on to explain how civilians did not always understand:

A lot of people, that’s part of their memories too is how they used to go out and party with the guys and the girls and all that stuff. That’s, we do that. You know and people don’t understand that. That’s how we used to do it. And some of them—don’t you think you’re too old for that? And blah, blah, blah. But it’s all the nostalgia. It’s not just the partying part that you like, it’s the nostalgia of it. And ... the memories and... the stories and stuff like that and you’re talking about your friends and your buddies and your... whatever back then. That’s what people love, they love living in the moment of that nostalgia-ness. All the time, right? And then they get back to reality and oh yeah now I gotta go back to my family again, right? So yeah I think it can be tough sometimes. Yup... I think that’s when we do our Remembrance Day when we usually all get together and have our good blow-out, because we’re there with our buddies that we lost. That’s very important. You know you have to be able to share that and whatnot. And then—hey I miss that person or whatever because whatever happened... But I’m glad I’m here with you, we can share this moment and tomorrow will be a new day. But we’ll always have Remembrance Day.

Certainly, William is describing loss of military kin to death. However, he is also describing loss of kin to military release and loss of the means by which he habitually eased his vigilance, relaxed, and emotionally processed his military experiences with others who shared them. This, he told me, is what people who were never in the military ‘don’t understand’.

In his comments below, Whelan, a Canadian Forces veteran and a psychologist,

isolates a particular aspect of ‘partying’: alcohol consumption. Whelan describes a connection between the incorporation of drinking and that nexus of reminiscence that William has referred to as ‘nostalgia’; which I have interpreted as a method for coping with release bereavement.

I believe that the effects of repeated training and military deployments reach much deeper into our consciousness, and we learn to switch off emotionally. This emotional vacuum may explain the value of alcohol and other substances among military personnel—it quiets the vigilant thinking brain, allowing people to move to a more emotional version of themselves, at least temporarily (Whelan 2016: 250).

Based on my conversations with several veterans about vigilance habits, I suggest a similar connection between the use of alcohol and the negotiation of release bereavement following military release.

According to Irene, beyond its possible role in the activation of emotion, drinking often played a role in soldiers’ career advancement. In her comments below, Irene explains Army mess halls⁴⁷ to me. She served in the 1980s:

You have to be a member of the mess. Meaning a portion is taken out of your pay every month for membership dues... There is the senior NCO’s⁴⁸ mess. There is the junior NCOs mess. You have to, according to your rank, belong to a mess. Uh, yeah. Just according to your rank. You must belong to it... So this is where your functions are. And sometimes you’re ordered to go to the mess. Like not now, but it used to be. You were actually expected to go to the mess on Fridays. And support your mess. Have a drink or two. Well after a long week of work sometimes that drink became three or four or five... right? And then there’s TGIF, Thank God Its Friday. Where the drinks are cheaper ... Well they’ve moved it to Thursdays because they found that too many people were getting’ drunk on Fridays. So since they’ve moved it to Thursdays now people realize they have to work the next day so it’s not become a drunk fest. Um but the military does teach

⁴⁷ Mess halls are where personnel eat and socialize on Canadian Forces Bases. As of 2017, all regular and reserve Canadian Forces members were required to join the mess corresponding with their rank (2017b: www.forces.gc.ca).

⁴⁸ NCO, here, means non-commissioned officer.

you to drink. There's no doubt about it. Uh people that have never had a drop to drink before go to these messes and then it's the old boys club. You know what I mean? "Oh come on have a beer." "Oh I don't—" "no, no you gotta have a beer." So you have a beer and the next time you might have two. And the next time you might have three. And then the further up the rank you get the longer you sit in the mess but then you start talking. A lot of people's careers have been made and lost in the mess. Really. You know like career managers come to visit and you're a senior NCO well they're all senior NCOs so you go to the mess and sit with the career managers, talking.

Alcohol consumption, thus, often became incorporated as habit among Canadian Forces members horizontally (between soldiers to cope with stress), vertically (in the mess where leadership is sometimes negotiated), and organizationally (considered by the institution to be supportive of the promotion of primary military group cohesion) (Siedbold 2000; Hockey 1986). As incorporated habit, veterans carried it into retirement to cope with release bereavement. Sometimes, like their use of humour and swearing, 'partying' did not always fit with the dominant habitus of civilian arenas of engagement (Jackson 2008) and provoked experiences of dys-appearance.

In this section I have discussed various skills and habits incorporated by veterans during their military careers. Skills and habits related to vigilance including prepared alertness and situational awareness, and, those not related to vigilance including the use of humour, profanity and 'partying', were organized around the principle of combat readiness to support military group cohesion. Whilst appropriate and functional in military contexts, in civilian environments, the performance of vigilance and non-vigilance skills and habits provoked experiences of dys-appearance among most of the veterans with whom I spoke. Such experiences of dys-appearance were often expressed to me in terms of isolation.

5.6 “It wasn’t that big of a deal for me”

Most of the veterans I spoke with during my field research described experiences of loss and/or what can be characterized as dys-appearance, two aspects of what I refer to as post-military release bereavement. I have argued that the accumulation of such experiences is causally related to the sense of dis-emplacement and isolation identified by veterans in the time following their military release. Importantly however, the veterans I spoke with did not all struggle with a sense of dis-emplacement to the same degree. Those whose lives were the most interrupted by sense of dis-emplacement were often simultaneously managing both operational stress injuries including post-traumatic stress disorder and stress related to medical release. Veterans who were able to choose the time of their retirement, rather than have it dictated to them as a consequence of physical and/or psychological injuries sustained whilst serving, seemed to struggle with release bereavement and sense of dis-emplacement less acutely. Some of these veterans connected choices they made during and after their military career to their comparatively less challenging transition into post military life. For example, in response to my question about what transition back into civilian society was like for her, Quinn said:

No, it’s not really hard depending on how you handled the military life. One thing I noticed when I was in. It’s, a lot of people—because, the military cannot look after you [*once you retire*]. You know, you can get cheap rent, cheap quarters. You can get fed for minimum amount of dollar. You can get clothes; of course you have to wear your uniforms. And so on. A lot of people took advantage of that... so when they came out of the military there was a culture shock. Oh my—now I have to buy my own clothes? I have to get my own meal? ... But a lot of people like myself have refused to live in military quarters. I’ve always rented my own place. I always hold my own house. So getting out was, well it’s a different job basically. Yes, it’s not really the same. That’s probably why I join [*names a local security provider*]. Kind of keep me in the same frame of mind.

The company Quinn was working for at the time of our interview kept her in a military “frame of mind” because it was established, in part, for that purpose. Quinn’s branch, established during WWII, was part of a national not-for-profit organization that was created after WWI to employ veterans. According to Quinn, as veterans of the Canadian Forces, employees imported military ways of doing things to their new jobs as civilians, which consequently lessened the kind of “culture shock” expressed by veterans who, for example, found it hard to adjust to the civilian work ethic they encountered in their first jobs following their military release.

Richard also worked for a company with military connections. He decided to gradually transition into civilian society before he retired and referred to the experience so far as “basically a fairly successful, happy transition”:

I transitioned out gradually. I left the regular Army in 2010. I left it on more or less a happy note. I mean I didn’t quit in anger or disgust or anything I just decided that it was time to go. You know, go when you’re happy. So I did. And um, so I left the regular Army. I joined the Reserve um I instructed at the Army Staff College for two years as a part-time reservist and I went, I began to work part-time in the field that I’m in now as a civilian. And I also got involved in some community activities. And then this summer I, when I hit 55, which is when I said I would always, take my uniform off. I did so and I left the Reserve. But a year previous to that I had been hired full-time by the company I was contracting with. And so I’m working on a full-time basis. Um my company provides training support to the military so I still work around the military.

Other retired veterans similarly described military adjacent ways of doing things in fields including Corrections, the defense industry, or, as safety officers in the construction industry. These job environments, if not actually staffed by ex-military employees, were sufficiently regimented that the “culture shock” of release was less disruptive; at least at work. Veterans like Quinn and Richard were in no way immune to release bereavement,

but their post-release jobs in environments with military (or military-like) ways of doing things, according to them, somewhat mitigated their sense of dis-emplacement.

Factors that affect more or less challenging transition experiences, then, may include pre-release planning. They certainly include a veteran's deployment history — when they served, for example, where they served, whether their deployments were on dangerous operations, and, whether they sustained physical or psychological injuries whilst serving. I address in detail the connections between deployment history and sense of dis-emplacement in Chapter Six, as part of my discussion of secondary wounding.

In this chapter, I have applied perspectives on the processes of grief over various losses connected with life in the military to veterans' experiences of the period of time following their release from the Canadian Forces. I refer to this period of time, in which veterans were “actively dealing with the impact” of the loss of their relationship with the military, as release bereavement (O'Connor 1991: 260). Some of the veterans who participated in my research describe their membership in the NVMO as having helped them to resolve the impact of that loss. Others continued to deal with it at the time of my research.

The period of release bereavement has an affective aspect including grief over loss of kin, purpose, existential security, and sense of place. Release bereavement also has an embodied aspect including the dys-appearance of military skills and habits. I have organized my discussion of the affective and embodied aspects of release bereavement in separate sections but the veterans I spoke with experienced them simultaneously. Practically, they were embedded within each other and experienced as a state of dis-

emplacement. Some veterans also sustained dis-emplacing, re-traumatizing wounds during the period following their military release. It is to this process of secondary wounding that my discussion now turns.

Chapter Six

The Process of Post-release Dis-emplacement: Post-release Wounding

After attending a showing of an independent short film at a Royal Canadian Legion in central Calgary, I asked Glenn if he thought it was important for civilian Canadians to know about soldiers' experiences. The short film was fiction, meant to address the challenges facing veterans who are readjusting to civilian society following their careers in the military. Its protagonist, a veteran, was portrayed as struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder. Later, in response to my question, Glenn cited an anonymous poem believed by some historians to have been written by an imprisoned British soldier on the wall of a church in Pennsylvania during the American Revolutionary War:

In times of war and not before,
God and the soldier men adore;
When the war is over and all things righted,
The Lord's forgot and the soldier slighted (Davis 1880: 157).

I believe Glenn's choice of verse indicated his perception, as a veteran, of a failure of reciprocity of recognition⁴⁹ (Jackson 2008: 43). Recognition, recalling Jackson, may be situated within a reciprocal logic of exchange as an existential good. Unlike goods with measurable value, existential goods have moral value that is impossible to calculate (2008: 43). Like any exchange, however, a failure in reciprocity occurs when existential goods have not been fairly distributed. In the veteran riding community, reciprocity of recognition operated between veteran members and civilian society. It failed where veterans perceived civilian society's recognition in exchange for their military

⁴⁹ Discussion of the failure of reciprocity of recognition, and its relationship with emplacement, appears in Chapter One, section 4.2, Existentiality in Place.

contributions to have been insufficiently given, or not given at all. In this section I approach veterans' experiences of failure of reciprocity of recognition as one form of secondary wounding (Matsakis 1996).

Secondary wounding occurs when the people, caregivers or institutions to which trauma survivors turn for support exacerbate survivors' psychological injuries rather than ameliorate them (Matsakis 1996: 90). Together I am referring to such people, caregivers and institutions as helpers. Among the veterans I spoke with, while helpers included medical and mental health professionals, they also included friends and family who were not medical and mental health professionals. According to Matsakis, helpers can exacerbate trauma survivors' psychological injuries by: 1) disbelieving, denying, or discounting their trauma, 2) blaming the survivor for their trauma, 3) stigmatizing the survivor, and 4) denying the survivor assistance (1996: 90).

In contexts of disbelief, denial and discounting, (should be) helpers minimize or discount the significance and meaning of the traumatic experience to the survivor, as well as the impact of the traumatic experience on the survivor's life (1996: 90). I encountered expressions of disbelief, denial and discounting several times in my research. One example came up in my conversation with a riding group member about a news story circulating in January 2014. Late in 2013, a Canadian Forces veteran committed suicide by driving into oncoming traffic near Calgary (2014: www.ctvnews.ca). News outlets at the time reported that her family believed she had "developed PTSD as a result of 'protracted battles' with Veterans Affairs over medical benefits for dental work she had done in the late 1980s" while on deployment in Germany (2014: www.ctvnews.ca). In his

comments below, a riding community member compared the news story to his own understanding of how PTSD develops among veterans:

... That is not post-traumatic stress as far as I'm concerned. Okay. Post-traumatic stress is you witness something that you cannot live with. Okay? The fact that you didn't get dental surgery done properly, that's not exactly the same as you know something you've done, like killing somebody for example... or witnessing somebody die. You know something that just completely turns your mind to mush that you cannot live with. You keep dreaming about it. Day in, day out, day out type—that's, that's a completely different concept... That's what I feel. Yeah. That's my opinion. I mean I'm not an expert on it but that's how I feel about it.

This perspective, according to Allan English, reflects an attitude towards stress injuries that was common in the Canadian Forces about twenty years ago (English 2008; Brunet and Monson 2014; Sareen et al. 2017; Kopacz et al. 2018).

In the period 1990-1995... most militaries, including the CF, believed that the only 'legitimate' stress casualties were those whose condition could be directly attributed to conventional combat. This was reflected in the terminology in use at the time to describe stress casualties, which was "combat stress reaction". In the 1990s, it was assumed that there was a clear distinction between combat and non-combat missions, and all CF operations at the time were considered to be non-combat, what the US military dismissively referred to as Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW—pronounced "moot-wah")... This led to situations where even those who had suffered severe physical injuries received little official support... (English 2008: 19).

Based on my observations and conversations, this perspective on operational stress injuries reflecting "value judgments about who was 'entitled' to have symptoms" of post-traumatic stress disorder persisted into 2014 among some riding community members (English 2008: 19). Offering a counter perspective, another riding community member approached the debate from the standpoint of a trauma survivor and veteran of a non-combat Canadian Forces deployment. Expressing frustration about not being believed by a friend (who was not in the riding community), this veteran member told me:

I was trying to explain this ... PTSD and you know what I got? I got a very surprising response... [*Names the friend*] does not believe I've got PTSD... Because it's not—what situation? I didn't go to Afghanistan. I didn't fuckin' go to Bosnia. I didn't go to Rwanda. I didn't see anybody get blown up. You know? No.

These two perspectives on post-traumatic stress disorder aptly demonstrate disbelief, denial and discounting in the context of secondary wounding. However, it is important to note that while some riding community members excluded experiences that did not take place in combat contexts as authentically traumatic, likely provoking experiences of secondary wounding in various other members, all riding community members were not so exclusive. Several veterans did express to me a conception of post-traumatic stress disorder as only legitimate when sustained as a result of combat experience in dangerous operations. However, others reflected the Canadian Forces more current attitude towards operational stress injuries; specifically, that they may be sustained on “many types of military missions” (English 2012: 11).

Helpers may also provoke experiences of secondary wounding in trauma survivors by blaming survivors for their own trauma (Matsakis 1996: 91). Rachel provides one example in her comments about being in the Canadian Army in the 1990s:

I think the vets from that decade have to be the most messed up. You know because—and when I say vets I mean people like myself um from, that had to work in conditions in various places in that decade. Uh because they [*Department of National Defence leadership*] were being two-faced or hypocritical. They would be saying you know we care for our soldiers when they come back uh but you, we're treated badly you know. And when I say badly I mean like you get treated like it's your fault you're sick. You know that sort of condescension, you know. Snap out of it, right?

Rachel seems to be referring to the Canadian Forces attitude toward stress injuries described by English, which dismissed psychological injuries as a personality flaw. Ian and Amber explained it further to me:

Amber: There's a huge stigma in the military um for any kind of illness. But particularly so for mental illness. Um you know it's kind of seen as um

Ian: Weak

Amber: Weak. Well yeah. And they, well they say you know it's like griping or you know they downgrade it too. Like so they'll say instead of you know that you're dealing with PTSD they'll say that you're uh—what is the word there that I'm trying to think of? It's starts with an M. Anyways, but you know you're a griper, a whiner, complainer kind of thing. So they—

Ian: Malingerer

Amber: They down— malingerer! So they downgrade it from you know dealing with what your real issue is right? To something that's less so that it makes it, so that it makes it seem like it's just a personal issue that they don't really need to deal with, right? That's something you need to buck up and pull your socks up and get over it, right? Kind of thing. So it's easy 'cause it relieves them of responsibility of dealing with the issue of what these guys are coming back with, right?

As indicated by Ian and Amber, discounting, denial (and sometimes outright disbelief) was often embedded within the secondary wounding experience of survivor blaming. Blaming the survivor for their own trauma, according to Rachel, Ian, and Amber, enabled helpers representing the Department of National Defence to shift financial and ethical responsibility of care away from the institution and onto the veteran.

The third way that helpers may exacerbate trauma survivors' injuries is through stigmatization. Stigmatization occurs “when others judge the victim⁵⁰ negatively for normal reactions to the traumatic event or for any long-term symptoms he or she may suffer” (Matsakis 1996: 91). Stigmatizing judgments may take the form of ridicule or condescension, as they did in Rachel's example (‘snap out of it’), or may include negative

⁵⁰ Matsakis uses ‘victim’ and ‘trauma survivor’ synonymously in her description of stigmatization (1996: 91). Unless citing her directly, I prefer to use the term ‘survivor’.

or pejorative labeling of the survivor's post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms (1996: 91). Judgments may also occur, according to Matsakis, in the form of "misinterpretation of the survivor's psychological distress as a sign of deep psychological problems or moral or mental deficiency" (1996: 91). In the following interview excerpt, for example, Ian, and Amber discuss how civilians with whom he has worked have misinterpreted the relationship between his professionalism at work and his military experiences:

Ian: ... You could have your job—you could lose your job. There's still areas that uh, because a civilian will possibly actually understand even less about what you went through. I mean my bosses—I've actually been pretty, pretty good. They know I do all this veteran stuff. And yeah I've, every now and then you might say you know what you have done and—or where were ya, and give a little tidbit of information...

Amber: That's enough! *[laughs]*

Ian: We don't know if we want, you're not gonna be coming in with a gun tomorrow are ya? I say, no it's good. I don't own one so it's good *[laughs]*. I mean it does stress them out, it does—it still comes from there too... Well there's incidents. I mean you see guys that go postal as they say—especially in the States. And then they come out and say this guy was suffering from PTSD and stuff like that and so the stigma is still there right?

The anxiousness Ian's co-workers have expressed, and their generalization of all veterans struggling with post-traumatic stress disorder as potentially dangerous, aptly exemplifies Matsakis' perspective on stigmatization. Ian adds to it, however. As he explained, civilian employers and co-workers' misunderstanding of veterans' psychological distress, a normal reaction to traumatic experience, may occasionally jeopardize veterans' job security.

Stigmatization, according to Matsakis, also includes the implication or "outright statement" that the survivor's symptoms are an excuse to solicit "financial gain, attention" or sympathy (1996: 91). One veteran told me, for example, that the Canadian

Forces currently has “a lot of freeloaders that leech the system.” Such freeloaders, according to this veteran, take care away from other veterans with “better needs.” My interpretation of “better needs” here is veterans with injuries sustained in combat situations only. While the expression of such sentiments regarding what makes post-traumatic stress disorder legitimate likely fall into the category of re-wounding stigmatization, once again, every veteran did not share them. Nevertheless, expressions of such attitudes are examples of veterans wounding other veterans, a topic I address in more detail later. Matsakis cites punishing the survivor rather than the offender, and other ways of “depriving the victim of justice,” as the fourth form of judgment that stigmatization can take in the context of secondary wounding (1996: 91).

Finally, argues Matsakis, helpers exacerbate survivors’ injuries by denying them the assistance they had expected or been promised (1996: 91). Helpers in such contexts are usually medical and mental health professionals. Walter describes this aspect of secondary wounding to me in the following excerpt from our conversation. A veteran of the war in Afghanistan, Walter brought the concept to my attention for the first time:

What it seems is that the soldier is injured in the field but when he gets back all of the support systems and the mechanisms and his chain of command and everybody that’s supposed to be there to support him—and the health care system, and Veterans Affairs and uh integrated support centres—all these people are supposed to be there to help but again, uh, there’s a lot of difficulty because it’s not fully integrated and uh a lot of it is not working... Uh the soldier uh ends up becoming what they call secondary wounded, which is being re-traumatized by the fact that uh he’s not getting the assistance or the help or the mental help or the psychological needs being met and so on... I myself personally spend an awful lot of time fighting with Veterans Affairs. And uh I’m sure you’ve seen many, many documented cases. And that’s a classic example where a soldier is expecting support when they’re fighting for two and half, three years for basic benefits and you’re not anticipating that when you’re in Afghanistan. You’re anticipating that when you come home uh everything is gonna be there for you.

Walter approaches secondary wounding as resulting from expectations for care left unmet, and the ensuing effects of the struggle to acquire care. Recalling Matsakis, he describes that denial of assistance as damaging. Wade, wounded on operations in the 1990s, made similar connections between the denial of his expectations of care and secondary wounding:

... My benefits were zero. All around. So yeah. Was I hard done by? Yeah. And I realized I needed a job. I needed to do something because everything I thought was—everything I thought that the military was gonna do for you, they didn't. They abandoned you... I can recall one of my generals that I worked for, I hadn't realized it was Super Bowl and I called him at half time. And I said I'm gonna be on... *[a local]* radio show on Tuesday morning. I called him on a Sunday and I said you know I feel like I've been uh thrown in the closet, light turned off, door locked and the key thrown away. Pretty much abandoned... Like I said before, I'm convinced that the lack of support from VAC has exacerbated some of these guys' PTSD. It just caused it.

Matsakis concurs. "Secondary wounding experiences," she argues, "can be as painful and powerful as the original traumatic event" and likewise require healing (1996: 94).

According to Matsakis, when survivors encounter disbelief, discounting and denial of their traumatic experience, are blamed for or stigmatized by it, or are denied assistance, such encounters often alter survivors' attitudes towards particular groups of people and institutions (1996: 101). This was true for many veterans with whom I spoke; particularly, regarding their willingness to trust helpers. I have categorized the secondary wounding experiences they shared with me three ways: wounding by institutions including the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada, wounding by other veterans, and wounding by civilian society.

6.1 Wounding by the institution

Veterans talked about wounding by the institution in two contexts: economic support and existential recognition (Jackson 2008). Above I discussed how Walter and Wade experienced secondary wounding as expectations and needs for financial support unmet, and the subsequent struggle to have them met. Following the injuries they sustained on deployment, they told me, neither the Department of National Defence nor Veterans Affairs Canada adequately provided for them financially. Chapter Two addresses some of the major problems with Canada's veterans benefit system (the New Veterans Charter) as they existed at the time of my fieldwork and various ways in which veterans and others lobbied politicians and Veterans Affairs for changes to current (at the time) policies and practices. Here, I discuss how some veterans have experienced the claims process.

Veterans including Wade described the process of claiming one's benefits, what Walter called "fighting with Veterans Affairs," as wounding. Several veterans attributed the (re-wounding) stress of the claims process to Veteran Affairs Canada staff's inability to prioritize veterans' needs over the organization's directives to save money. Richard, for example, describes how veterans could experience the process as dehumanizing:

I would say having dealt with them a little bit the issue at VAC is like the issue at most federal government ministries... The case files to them are largely numbers. Um they're just the material that flows through the ministry. The real job is to stop, is to save the government from spending a lot of money. That's the real job. Not to take care of anybody. And I think that if you were to ask the frontline workers in VA they would tell you that they are trying to do the best they can... My quarrel would not be with them at all. My quarrel would be with the people in the middle who run the bureaucracy who are probably sending out messages you know let's minimize the amount of money we're laying out here or insisting on ridiculous, idiotic bureaucratic processes that are just completely insane...

Greg similarly describes Veterans Affairs Canada as closed-fisted:

... The harder you try the less they want to deal with you. But they don't understand you—your frustration is that you're not listening to me. You know things that mean something to me, you're not listening. You, you're more worried about I gotta save the government so many dollars. So I'm not gonna give you this. You try so hard to, to make it on your own but it gets to a point you can't. You need a little help. That little push to get you over the wall. And what they do is they stand at the wall and they stop you. Because the guy knows that if you go across that wall it's gonna cost the government money. And as we know the whole word runs on the dollars and cents.

Several veterans described a kind of strategy of denial, which they said they had heard was standard operating procedure at Veterans Affairs Canada to stop claimants from making it across Greg's "wall." According to Galen, Veterans Affairs Canada was like an insurance company that always denied veterans' first claims:

The impression that I have of the Veterans Affairs for claims is like an insurance company. Imagine if you will a hundred claims going to an insurance company, each claim is worth a dollar, just for a number. If the insurance company denies 100 percent of the claims, saying they're not valid enough or there isn't enough information or whatever the case may be, of that 100 people, maybe 15 will appeal the decision. Okay? Of that 15 people who appeal the decision, most likely, 12 or more will get denied a second time. That—now that group that's been denied a second time don't bother even trying again, so now they're down to say three to five people that appeal the appeal or go for arbitration or whatever the next step is; right? And now the company finally agrees to pay out three bucks out of a hundred possible dollars that they would have to pay, much like an insurance company, and I'm waiting to get this letter back in the mail that says denied, denied, denied for every claim.

Todd also talked about a strategy of denial to save money:

I did that. I put it in. Put it in again. Put it in again. Keep pushing. Because the first time they always deny it. That's their policy. It's like an insurance company. They deny any insurance claim right away the first time. Then start waiting around if you don't claim it, then that's one way they save a lot of money because a lot of people won't claim a second time. Apparently you need two or three attempts to get where you're going ...

Following Matsakis, veterans seeking assistance for physical and psychological injuries might experience denial of assistance as secondary wounding. If the denial of a

claim were itself re-traumatizing, it would make it very difficult indeed to “keep pushing” while experiencing such stress. Perhaps this is one reason why some veterans have been reluctant to pursue claims beyond a first denial. I did not speak to any staff at Veterans Affairs Canada to solicit their perspective on what veterans have described as its strategy of denying initial claims to save money. However, my intention has not been to either confirm or deny it. Rather, it has been to suggest that the narrative some veterans shared with me regarding such a strategy demonstrates their profound lack of trust in an organization they once believed would be there for them. Many regard its failure (or perceived failure) to sufficiently help as having been significantly damaging. As Wade told me, “VAC is seen as the enemy, they’re not trusted.” Rather than receiving the help they expected in return for risking (or sacrificing) their lives as well as their physical and mental health while away from home, assistance some asked for when they returned to Canada, many veterans were instead involuntarily dis-employed and dropped onto another perceived battlefield; the claims process. Involuntarily dis-employment in this context was in the form of their medical release.

I approach most contexts of military release—perhaps even all contexts of military release—as dis-employing for veterans to varying degrees. Unlike a serving member who chose to retire from their military career, however, a serving member who was medically released did not choose to retire. They have been made to retire. I believe that this lack of choice, this involuntary form of dis-employment, compounds the challenges that medically released veterans faced as part of the processes of dis-employment. According to Wade, many veterans experienced medical release as a

betrayal, or, what Matsakis might call a secondary wound:

... I don't think the young guys are viewing this as a helpful situation. A lot of them are being forced out of a job that they love. Because they have been playing GI Joe and cowboys since the age of three. This is all they know, this is all they want to do. And now because something has happened, that they didn't do to themselves that someone did to them, they have no idea where to turn...

As I will discuss in the next chapter, veterans in the riding community eventually turned to each other.

Veterans also talked about wounding by the institution in the context of existential recognition or the lack of it (Jackson 2008). Based on my conversations with veterans, this context of secondary wounding was experienced in particular by veterans of the Canadian Forces peacekeeping mission in the Balkans in the 1990s. Upon returning to Canada, these veterans sustained secondary wounds when they encountered denial by the Department of National Defence that the operations they participated in in the Balkans involved combat situations. Academics and journalists cite various and complicated reasons for the Department of National Defence's denial, detailed analysis of which is beyond the scope of this section (Windsor 2000; 2009; Off 2004). However, some discussion of the Somalia Affair, the events that occurred at Medak Pocket in Croatia in the fall of 1993, and the myth of peacekeeping are necessary to address the connection between existential recognition (or lack of it) and the secondary wounding experiences described to me by some veterans.

In the fall of 1993, as some Canadian Forces soldiers were returning to Canada following their participation in the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR), civilian Canadians and senior staff at Department of National Defence

headquarters were reacting to events that had taken place on a simultaneous peacekeeping mission in Somalia (Windsor 2000; Off 2004). Canadian media had informed the public that members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment were being held for the beating and murder of a Somali teenager named Shidane Arone, and reported that senior officers and bureaucrats at the Department of National Defence had attempted to cover it up. The scandal became known as the Somalia Affair and eventually, in reaction to public outcry, a Commission of Inquiry was launched in 1994 by the Chrétien administration (Off 2004: 246; 1994: www.cbc.ca). The Somalia Affair resulted in widespread negative opinion of the professionalism of the Canadian Forces among Canadian civilian society and paved the way for huge cutbacks to the defence budget (Windsor 2000: 23; 2004: 247).

Journalist Carol Off has argued that the intense and protracted media attention to the Somalia Affair, and its political fallout, directly motivated senior officers of the Department of National Defence to attempt to avoid another potential scandal related to the concurrent mission in what was then the country of Yugoslavia, a mission in which Canadian soldiers had come into contact with Croatian troops (2004: 234).

In September of 1993, as part of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia, Canadian soldiers were deployed to implement a cease-fire between Croatian forces and Serbian forces in the disputed Medak Pocket, near the city of Gospić, Croatia (Windsor 2009: 338). Here, on September 13, they came under Croatian attack by machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire for over 15 hours. The resulting firefight between Croatian and Canadian forces marked the first significant combat experienced by Canadian soldiers since the Korean War (Off 2004: 242). During the course of the battle,

Canadian soldiers allegedly killed 27 Croatian soldiers (2004: 241-242). When Croat forces began to pull out of the disputed area on September 16, Canadian forces were prevented from entering it until a newly negotiated agreement came into effect at 1200 hours; at which time Croatian forces refused them entry for another hour and a half while Croatian secret police attempted to destroy evidence of ethnic cleansing (Windsor 2009: 352). When Canadian soldiers were finally able to enter the area that Croatian forces had occupied, they were tasked with recording what evidence there remained of the ethnic cleansing (Windsor 2009: 352).

Unlike the events in Somalia, Canadian soldiers' efforts to enforce the cease-fire in the Medak Pocket generated commendations for professionalism and excellence (Windsor 2009: 339). In 1993 the United Nations' reputation in Yugoslavia was waning because United Nations Protection Force units had repeatedly failed to secure areas they had been tasked with protecting (2009: 339). Following the Medak battle, Colonel George Oehring, Commander of United Nations Protection Force Sector South, wrote in a memorandum that the Canadians "won the whole mission a credibility and respect that will be long remembered by the opposing parties and much facilitate our future efforts here" (Windsor 2009: 339). Canadian soldiers were awarded a United Nations Force Commanders Commendation for their accomplishments in the battle at Medak (2009: 339). Moreover, according to Lee Windsor, "Canadian procedures for sweeping and recording" evidence of ethnic cleansing became, "the standard template for use in UNPROFOR" and was later used by the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia to indict Croatian war criminals (2009: 354).

It would be almost another decade before the Government of Canada officially recognized Canadian soldiers' accomplishments in Croatia, however. When veterans of United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia returned to Canada, instead of recognition for their accomplishments, they encountered a public that generalized a revulsion for the violence committed against Shidane Arone to all Canadian Forces members. They were also met with refusal by Department of National Defence authorities to counter the public's negative perception of them—soldiers who had never been in Somalia—with the United Nations commended professionalism of their efforts in Croatia. Below, Amber describes the difficult job Canadian soldiers were tasked with in the Medak Pocket and the Department of National Defence's delay in recognizing it:

It was ten years after they served in Yugoslavia is when they actually admitted that the guys there had been in active combat in unfavourable conditions. And when they went into Medak Pocket um they actually put a stop, the same troops that went in there, that 800 or 1000 guys, they put a stop to the genocide that was occurring there. Um so they went in, as UN troops and had to split these guys with as little um combat, actual combat—because they weren't allowed to—um as possible. But still separate the two sides of troops, right? And that was where that you know particular um, you know actually admitting that they were in a combat situation during that entire time? That didn't occur until about ten years after they served in Yugoslavia... It took them that long before they were really admitting, well yeah we actually had an issue over there...

Following the battle at Medak, the news media in Canada was focused on the unfolding Somalia scandal, reporting almost nothing on the mission in Yugoslavia (Off 2004: 242). According to Off, news media were not reporting on the contact situations between Canadian soldiers and Croatian soldiers because the Department of National Defence wished to keep it secret:

The truth—that Canadian soldiers now had to use their weapons, not just to make peace but to defend themselves against attack—might have had political

consequences the authorities were unwilling to confront. The Medak operation illustrated this new reality as nothing before it ever had, and the Medak operation, therefore, had to be erased from the official record... One dead teenager in Somalia had shaken the defence establishment to its foundations. Reports of 27 dead Croats... was potentially too sensational to entrust to a scandal mongering public... (2004: 241, 269).

Authorities at Department of National Defence headquarters were so keen to avoid news media reports of Croatian soldiers killed in a firefight with Canadian soldiers, argues Off, because the notion of Canadian soldiers in combat conflicted with civilian Canada's self-identification in the 1990s as a nation of peacekeepers (2004: 287). Off suggests that since the Cold War governments like Canada have used the word 'peacekeeping' to convince voters that United Nations missions were not dangerous for Canadian Forces members (2004: 287). In line with Off, in 2009, Bernd Horn referred to peacekeeping as mythology:

Many Canadians do not believe their military is a warfighting force. They wish to maintain the illusion that we are a nation of peacekeepers who venture forth in the turbulent violent world and do good. They wish to hang-on to images of soldiers delivering humanitarian supplies, providing aid and infrastructure, and passing out teddy bears to children in impoverished war-torn or disaster-inflicted areas around the world... However, the reality is much different... (Horn 2009: 12).

Department of National Defence authorities sought to maintain the myth of peacekeeping by ignoring the battle at Medak Pocket; which in turn meant denying veterans' combat experiences there (Off 2004: 269). The Department of National Defence's failure to recognize that Canadian troops had been in active combat conditions in Croatia had lasting and damaging effects on many veterans of the mission (2004: 240), including several members of the riding community. Amber talked to me about some of the

consequences of Department of National Defence denial of veterans' experiences in Croatia:

I look at it in terms of validation in saying, okay these guys were in a combat situation, and they're coming back with PTSD. That's fine. That's kind of, it happens under those circumstances so now let's deal with it, right? But if they deny that the circumstances even occurred then there's no help and then this other kind of nasty sort of behaviour starts happening where they invalidate that personal experience. Individually and as a group and everything else. So I mean [*names her husband*] sought some help a little bit later through a military psychiatrist who was awful. And basically reiterated the military line that nothing is happening and therefore you have no reason to complain.

No reason to complain, of course, meant there was no physical or psychological illness to treat, an apt example of secondary wounding through disbelief, denial and discounting, and denial of assistance (Matsakis 1996: 90-91).

Veterans of United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia also sustained secondary wounding in the form of survivor blaming (1996: 91). While Department of National Defence authorities denied the occurrence of combat contact in Croatia specifically, within the Department of National Defence, health professionals and other soldiers often dismissed veterans' operational stress from that mission as weakness. "PTSD," argues Off, "became synonymous with 'unfit for service'" (2004: 245). Consequently, many veterans who expressed their distress eventually faced medical release (2004: 245, 257).

Despite the Department of National Defence's efforts to keep the events that took place in Croatia in 1993 a secret from the public, in 1999 the chief of defence staff announced a board of inquiry into the question of soldiers' exposure to harmful contaminants (Off 2004: 260). The previous year, a Lieutenant-Colonel who had commanded the battalion that had deployed to the Medak Pocket with United Nations

Protection Force Yugoslavia brought the matter to Ottawa's attention at the parliamentary Standing Committee on National Defence and Veterans Affairs (2004: 258). The Lieutenant-Colonel was concerned about reports he had heard regarding "widespread illnesses among his former soldiers" and the disappearance of a memo submitted by a Navy doctor warning authorities of contaminants in the Croatian soil (2004: 260). An inability to explain the disappearance of the memo in turn led to a criminal investigation of tampering with personnel files. Allegedly, the Navy doctor had a version of this memo placed in the files of all personnel who had deployed with the United Nations Protection Force to the Medak Pocket and senior officers had ordered an Army corporal to remove the memos and shred them (2004: 260). Ultimately, the board of inquiry did not find sufficient evidence to connect soldiers' illnesses to toxic soil and attributed their illnesses instead to operational stress injuries including post-traumatic stress disorder (2004: 268).

The inquiry is relevant here because, in part, it forced Department of National Defence authorities to recognize that veterans of the United Nations Protections Force in Yugoslavia sustained operational stress injuries as a result of combat situations in which they participated, and, from the collection of evidence of ethnic cleansing with which they were subsequently tasked. The inquiry is also relevant because, in my own conversations with veterans of the mission in the Balkans, references to inexplicable health problems and erased documents came up—the latter more than once. Moreover, it was my impression that the experience of having their personnel files tampered with was an instance of existential recognition denied, and thereby, another secondary wound sustained. Ian described to me his experience of file tampering:

...When I got home nobody believed me. Right? Well that didn't happen. That didn't happen. That's all you heard from whoever you talked to and you kinda just shut up afterwards because you know you're being told it didn't happen. So. And then like I said, they erased all my docs... I arrived in Calgary and they were handing out all the medals for uh the Yugoslavian tour. I didn't get my medal 'til Calgary. For the actual tour. Um and anyway they said, you weren't there. They looked at my docs and they said, there was nothing—I had eight months of my life missing in my docs but there was nothing in there saying I went to Yugoslavia. I had gone through the Secrets and Information Act and actually had my—because my personnel evaluation report, I signed it in Yugoslavia. And when I got to *[names a Canadian Forces Base]* everybody was saying, there is none. They couldn't find it. They didn't know where it went... I had a 9.8 PR. Which is, you walk on water and the soles of your feet don't get wet. Like ten is unheard of and I got a 9.8 PR and I wanted a copy of it. But I didn't get one over there and then when I came home they said it disappeared...

The disappearance of his documents, Ian told me, "... left a little bitterness in my mouth."

Combined with the Department of National Defence's denial of his experiences on the mission, it also could have provoked secondary wounding experiences.

Following the Croatia inquiry and subsequent criminal investigation, in 2002, Governor General Adrienne Clarkson awarded veterans of United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia the Commander-in-Chief's Unit Commendation, the first such commendation of its kind (Windsor 2009: 334). Citing a "military deed of rare, high standard in extremely hazardous circumstances," the Governor General's words and commendation, according to Windsor, "seemed to signal government recognition of a new era for Canadian Forces"; an era in which the use of deadly force could be acknowledged as an aspect of peacekeeping (2009: 334). At the ceremony in which Governor General Clarkson made her presentation, Lieutenant General Mike Jefferey spoke as well:

These soldiers returned home from their war to find a nation absorbed in other problems, unaware of their sacrifices and ill prepared to support them in their time

of need. This made the transition back to peace very difficult and even today, many suffer in silence (LTGen Jefferey in Off 2004: 274).

Because one of the ways he measures the difference between complex post-traumatic stress disorder and non-complex post-traumatic stress disorder is the degree of damage their psychological injuries have done to veterans' ability to trust in institutions and society, Jonathan Shay argues that effective healing from complex post-traumatic stress disorder requires that society be involved in helping them regain their trust (2002: 166, 244-245). Matsakis similarly approaches damage to survivors' ability to trust as resulting from secondary wounding experiences (1996: 101); for example, Department of National Defence authorities' refusal to recognize United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia veterans' stress injuries in 1993, and thereby, deny veterans assistance. While the commendation ceremony in 2002 officially recognized veterans' experiences in Croatia, and to some degree acknowledged their "neglect" by Department of National Defence authorities and Ottawa (Off 2004: 274), it was not enough to complete what Shay refers to as "the circle of communalization" (2002: 244). I interpret his perspective on communalization as a process of re-incorporation.

According to Shay, the circle of communalization is complete, "when trauma survivors hear that enough of the truth of their experience has been understood, remembered, and retold with enough fidelity to carry some of this truth..." (2002: 244). "All of the truth," he adds, cannot ever be fully grasped by someone who did not experience that same trauma (2002: 244). The circle of communalization, a concept Shay developed around the experiences of American veterans of the war in Vietnam, represents the completion of a series of steps towards healing from complex post-traumatic stress

disorder. It accomplishes two things: it enables veterans' traumatic experiences to "have voice" and have that voice "heard, believed, remembered, and respoken," and, it enables veterans and members of civilian society to recognize one another's humanness" (2002: 243-244). Here I interpret 'humanness' as mutual belonging.

Below, Shay describes his vision of the final stages of the communalization of trauma, wherein American military and political organizations are not solely responsible for the prevention of "psychological and moral injury" (2002: 244). Civilian society, he argues, would be responsible too:

As a society we have found ourselves unable to offer purification to those who do the terrible acts of war on our behalf. I believe this is something to be done jointly by people from all our religions, from the arts, from the mental health professions, and from the ranks of combat veterans—*not* from the government. What I have in mind is a communal ritual with religious force that recognizes that *everyone* who has shed blood, no matter how blamelessly, is in need of purification... The community as a whole, which sent these young people to train in the profession of arms and to use those arms, is no less in need of purification. Such rituals *must* be communal with returning veterans. Not something done to or for them before they return to civilian life. This new cultural creation also must stay free of the taint of sectarian, political, and ideological partisanship, which would willingly kidnap such a ritual... (2002: 245).

In many respects, it seems to me, the "new cultural creation" Shay is appealing for is not new at all. It is a mourning ritual,⁵¹ an aggregation rite designed to do the social work of retrieving the bereaved from the liminal margins of grief and transforming them into the new roles they will assume in society as a result of their losses. As prescribed by Shay, mourning rites also help protect society from the dangerous effects of bereavement on its members (Counts and Counts 1991; Eisenbruch 1984; Van Gennep 1960). Shay

⁵¹ For more discussion on mourning rituals and its role in the processes of bereavement, see Chapter 5.1.

concedes, “I do not know how the creation of a new widely accepted cultural practice can be accomplished, but I know that we need it” (2002: 245). In hypothetical response, we might apply his requirements to the processes that make up a mourning ritual. Designed for the public expression of private grief over traumatic losses sustained in wartime, mourning rituals for-and-by veterans would also, necessarily, involve public recognition of those losses. The ritual would therefore give veterans voice, and have that voice heard, respoken and remembered by civilian participants. Moreover, it would transform no-longer-soldiers into veteran-civilian co-members of society, in acknowledgement of each other’s mutual “humanness.” Following Shay and Matsakis, then, mourning rituals in this context could directly help prevent secondary wounding experiences related to veterans’ damaged trust, such as has been expressed here by Canadian veterans of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia.

While the commendation ceremony in 2002 represented some part of veterans’ truth “believed,” veterans themselves did not voice it; nor did the ceremony ensure their truth was “respoken or remembered” (Shay 2002: 244). Indeed, according to veterans I spoke with, as late as 2013 most civilian Canadians they encountered remained unaware of their experiences in Croatia, myself included. “Here we are,” Glenn told me, “however many years after the fact and still nobody knows our story”. Accordingly, some veteran riding community members have created mourning rituals of their own and consider it part of the Calgary unit’s mandate to include educating civilians about Canadian soldiers’ experiences in Yugoslavia, and other work they did during their military careers. Discussion of these rituals in particular makes up part of Chapter Seven.

6.2 Wounding by civilian society

For many veterans of the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia, the experience of secondary wounding by denial of existential recognition was rooted not solely in their distrust of institutions like the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada. It was also rooted in their encounters with civilian Canadians following their military release. Off has argued that authorities at the Department of National Defence suppressed the reality of Canadian peacekeepers' contact in 1993 with Croatian forces in the former Yugoslavia because they feared another scandal like the Somalia Affair, should civilian Canada learn that Canadian soldiers may have killed Croatians in a firefight (2004: 241). Both Off and Windsor have also suggested that Canadian news outlets were preoccupied with the Somalia Affair at that time, which they pursued instead of covering Canadian involvement with United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia (Off 2004: 240; Windsor 2009: 336). Consequently, veterans of the peacekeeping mission were refused "recognition for their collective effort" in the Balkans by both the Department of National Defence and civilian Canada (Off 2004: 241). This failure to reciprocate the existential good of recognition,⁵² in exchange for their military contributions and sacrifices, caused veterans of the mission to sustain secondary

⁵² Off, Windsor and the veterans I spoke with used the word 'recognition' to mean the Canadian public and the news media's acknowledgement of the existence of their efforts in Croatia. This use of the word differs from Boulanger's perspective on recognition in the context of empathetic listening, which is discussed in Chapter Two, section Two (Boulanger 2008: 651-653). In the context of empathetic listening, recognition occurs between people who have experienced similar trauma; for example, veterans who were at the battle of Medak recognize each other's trauma because they have all experienced it. A psychologist who has never experienced combat trauma cannot recognize it but can listen with compassion, concern and without judgment to veterans' recounting of their experiences.

wounding; wounding on top of the physical and psychological injuries they sustained from combat and from gathering evidence of ethnic cleansing.

In my conversations, veterans' secondary wounding experiences by civilian society usually related to civilian Canada's lack of knowledge about veterans in general and civilians' complete unfamiliarity with veterans' participation in the United Nations mission in the former Yugoslavia in particular. Exemplifying the former, when I asked Victor if he believed civilian Canadians should better understand veterans, he talked about a kind of civilian-veteran understanding gap:

Victor: I always liked the idea of having to serve in the military out of high school for a couple of years. I think you know just the, just the self-discipline and training that you get from it. Um conscription, I guess is...what it is. Um I always seen a lot of benefits to it. And I think that kids nowadays would benefit a lot if they did that. So you know if they could understand veterans better and what veterans did and why they did it and whatever... yeah I think it would be, it would be very beneficial for them.

Karen: Beneficial how?

Victor: Well, number one is, is you know what I don't want—you don't talk to somebody like I used to and then they get this glazed look in their eyes and they're just totally out of touch, have no idea what it was all about. Um I don't think that they have an appreciation for um the sacrifices that a lot of veterans have made. Um you know they've, they've never stood a watch, they've got, they take a lot for granted not having done that. And so I think the more they understand about what veterans do and what they've done and appreciate the sacrifices that they, that some of them made. Number one is you know don't forget and maybe we can avoid uh conflict down the road someplace you know history repeats itself...

Victor goes on to talk about a kind of burden of adjustment, which fell more upon veterans than upon civilians. According to Victor, where any understanding was generated between veterans and civilians, it was the veterans that had to do most of the work to bridge the gap. He told me that finding some way for civilians to also make

adjustments towards narrowing the understanding gap would be welcome. I think of the adjustments Victor refers to as being situated within a balanced reciprocal exchange of existential goods between civilians and veterans. While they were soldiers, veterans, from this perspective, agreed to potentially risk their physical and psychological health in military service to civilians. In exchange, civilians' obligation has been to acknowledge and remember veterans' risks, sacrifices, and accomplishments. According to Victor, civilians had not been upholding their obligation.

As civilians had not equally reciprocated by acknowledging veterans' contributions on their behalf, in 1993, news outlets failed in their obligation to reciprocate by ignoring veterans of the mission in Yugoslavia, focusing instead almost exclusively on the affair in Somalia. In the following, Glenn expressed to me his impressions of, and frustration with, the media:

We did the right thing, we fought a good fight, we fought the hard fight and we did it because it was the right thing to do and it never hit the press. But if we'd done something wrong, it would have been all over the place... When you put the right spin on it you can make you know your soldiers look like a bunch of dirt bags. You know, which is what the media was out to do during the decade of darkness in the 90s... and that's our legacy. We were the tour that nothing happened on. Or the operation, the mission that nothing happened on. You know uh two dead and eight wounded. Doing nothing. Nothing going on... Well no. Shit did happen. And it should have been reported and it should have been told to the Canadian public.

Not only should their accomplishments have been reported Glenn told me, they should have been celebrated:

Our soldiers performed admirably over there. With crappy equipment, with bad rules of engagement we managed to get the job done... And I mean we, what we missed was the same thing the guys that fought in Korea missed. You know. We didn't get the pat on the back from anybody when we came home. We didn't get the thank you, we didn't get the, you guys did a good job. You know and that goes

a long way. Actually, conversely, we got the opposite. We were told we were liars, that that never happened, that we were all full of shit...

Here, Glenn is potentially indicating a transformational rite of aggregation of some kind, as has been described by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner (1960; 1967).⁵³ Such a rite also has much in common with Shay's concept of communalization (2002). As argued by Shay, participation in a ritual of communalization, which includes veterans and civilians (but excludes politicians or bureaucrats), is very important for helping psychologically wounded soldiers restore their social trust—such a ritual enables the public to acknowledge soldiers' efforts in war, welcomes them back into civilian society, and thereby transforms them from soldiers to veterans of a dangerous mission. When Glenn's unit had the opportunity to celebrate their homecoming with the public, however, it was rendered meaningless by civilians' unfamiliarity with the mission:

And uh we actually did get out on parade. We paraded from Mewata Armoury right down the street, right down to Olympic Plaza. Blue berets on, combats, marching down the street. Band playing. And then they dismissed us. We went into one of the conference centres to have finger food and drinks. And as I was walking in I heard—this guy asks us, one of our troops, what's this all about? We just came back from Croatia. What's going on there? We're like, yeah thanks [*laughs*]. Appreciate the support. Glad you were standing on the side of the street watching us go by thinking it looked pretty cool. Would have been even nicer if you actually had a clue what we had just done.

Beyond denial, disbelief, discounting, and denial of assistance, in the context of the mission in Yugoslavia, it is my assessment that civilians' failure to adjust did harm. From the perspective of some veteran riding community members, civilians' failure to familiarize themselves with veterans' accomplishments and sacrifices was also civilians'

⁵³ See Chapter Five, section one, for more discussion on rites of mourning as rites of transformation and aggregation.

failure to fulfill their side of the existential exchange. Some veterans experienced these failures as a secondary wound.

6.3 Wounding by other veterans

In June of 2013, I attended the official opening of Poppy Plaza with members of the riding community. Poppy Plaza is a permanent tribute to fallen Canadian Forces members and covers about 86,100 square feet of a busy intersection near downtown Calgary. The upper deck of the project features wood decking, benches, and poplar trees that overlook the Bow River. Below, along the riverbank, is featured a steel wall engraved with quotes from world leaders, Canadian citizens, and citizens from around the world. The quotes are backlit and meant to solicit visitors' contemplation of "diverse voices and perspectives relating to honour, hope and sacrifices during war time" (2018b: www.calgary.ca). The group had been invited to a nearby Royal Canadian Legion following the ceremony and while members decided they did want to have lunch together, they agreed they did not want to eat at the Legion. When I asked why, Quinn expressed to me her distaste for the Legion, which was grounded in having been told there that her Cold War military experiences did not make her a veteran. She then told me a story about the group having once been asked to leave a Legion for rowdy behaviour. We joked for a few minutes about her story before she became serious again. "No. But it's supposed to be our place." I was surprised to learn how many other veteran riding community members felt similarly.

The Legion was created as a response to two main factors: economic depression in Canada facing World War I veterans when they returned from Europe after the war, and,

World War I veterans' disappointment with the Pension Act of 1919.⁵⁴ Historians attribute these circumstances, in part, to the emergence of veterans' associations in communities across Canada following World War I. Various associations united to form the Great War Veteran Association (GWVA) in 1917, which in 1922 helped launch a commission of inquiry into the 1919 Pension Act. The GWVA soon fractured into various groups representing different veteran interests. These groups united again in 1925 to form the Canadian Legion of British Empire Service League, which would eventually become the Royal Canadian Legion. The Royal Canadian Legion played an important role in helping the Canadian government prepare for demobilization after World War II and the societal reincorporation of World War II veterans in Canada following the war (Morton 1998: 22-27; Veterans Affairs Canada 2004: 4-6). Although originally created by veterans to support veterans, during my fieldwork, many of the retired Canadian Forces members I spoke with told me the organization had lost its relevance over the last two decades or so. They identified two reasons for the Legion's waning popularity and impact: denial by veteran Legion members of peacekeeping as legitimate soldiering, and civilian membership.

So many veterans told me about experiencing denial of their legitimacy at a Legion hall that I added a question about it to my interview schedule. Richard and Vera provide an example:

Richard: ... I quit the Legion because of that. I got sick and tired of it. I'll tell you something else. That when the Museum of the Regiments, which is on the Crowchild Trail there in Calgary, was being built there were four regiments there one being ours... When we were soliciting funds to build a portion of it called the

⁵⁴ For more discussion of the Pension Act of 1919, see Chapter Three, section one.

Hall Of Honour, just a room where there's stone tablets in the walls and the name of every Patricia killed in action is engraved. We approached, the serving regiment approached the association for funding. And the response we got at that time—this was years ago now I don't think it would happen today—but the response we got was “well okay but not if you're going to engrave any names of anybody who was killed on a UN operation”. Now that would be bad enough except that there are several names engraved under the Korean War who had died because they drank de-icing fluid at a party by mistake. That was the attitude in those days, that—and I experienced it at the Legion in those days and I quit the Legion because I got sick and tired of being told no, you're not a real soldier blah, blah, blah. And I said screw this you know I don't need this shit. And you know, to tell you the truth, it's one of the reasons the Legion is dying. The Legion is dying because it failed to connect with the current generation of soldiers. It's trying desperately now and it can't do it. The Legion will be dead. There are very few people left in Legions who served in the military

Vera: Most of them are civilians.

Richard: Most of them are civilians and good on them by the way the Legion does a lot of excellent work in communities. But the Legion failed to connect with serving soldiers, started about 20 years ago and the result is Legion branches closing all over the country.

Richard went on to explain what made the denial of soldierhood to veterans of United Nations peacekeeping missions so upsetting by talking about a friend he served with:

Being shot at is being shot at. I mean you don't get shot at and say “oh yes I'm being shot at but it's only a peacekeeping mission so that's fine.” No. Being shot at is being shot at and did you know it's uh—No I appreciate the feeling. Um you know I had a very, very good friend who was in Croatia with me and one of his men committed suicide with a hand grenade and that was bad enough. I mean that was a horrible, horrible scene. Um my friend was already struggling with a couple other issues and that pushed him over the edge. When he came home he began to slide into very, very deep PTSD. He eventually... had to, to get out. And he went, retired back in Alberta. Got out on medical disability went back to Alberta and eventually he died of a heart attack, eventually, but um that was a guy who went from being a very, very able, capable officer with an excellent future in front of him to a very, very serious PTSD case because of what he experienced on what was classified as a peacekeeping operation. So I was not going to stand around in a Legion hall and let some guy who guarded a well and canal in 1944 tell me about what soldiering is. And unfortunately the damage, well as I said, the institutional damage been done to the Legion, um, and I don't think it will recover.

Glenn similarly attributes the Legion's waning membership in 2013-14 to some of its members' discounting of peacekeepers as soldiers:

The Legion as a whole has become grossly ineffective and they've realized it finally. Uh because the only veterans to go to see them for help with the Poppy Fund for the most part are World War II veterans and Korea veterans because they actually acknowledge that Korea was a war. So uh younger guys like me, like I wouldn't step foot in the Legion. In fact that's not true, I did. I shouldn't have I got thrown out. Caused a bit of a ruckus because I was told that we were sun tanning and drinking beer for six months. And nothing happened. And I got a little upset... And that's, that's happened many times. You know uh at least they were vets that said it...

Glenn is comparing having his legitimacy as a soldier discounted by a veteran to having it discounted by a civilian, which he has also experienced. These kinds of encounters among younger veterans, he told me, had led to a decline in their desire for Legion membership and thereby the Legion's capacity to either support younger veterans or provide an environment in which veterans might support each other:

People aren't going back, their membership's dwindling, their percentages aren't really up enough that they can even call themselves a veterans organization anymore. You go to any Legion in town here and probably 60% of the membership, or more, never put a uniform on in their life. In fact, if you're looking at the criteria to join the Legion, basically anybody can.⁵⁵ You know? Uh

⁵⁵ According to The Royal Canadian Legion, "Legion membership is open to any Canadian citizen or citizen of an Allied nation who is 18 years of age or older." Its mission statement is "to serve veterans, which includes serving military and RCMP members and their families, to promote Remembrance and to serve our communities and our country." There are four kinds of membership. Ordinary membership includes "still serving and retired military, reservists, RCMP, police officers, Canadian Coast Guard, and others..." Associate membership includes family members of those eligible for ordinary membership. Affiliate voting membership includes "Canadian citizens or Commonwealth subjects from an Allied nation" who are not eligible for the previous two kinds of membership. Affiliate non-voting membership includes "non-Canadian citizens or non-Commonwealth subjects" who are not eligible for the other three categories of membership (2019a: legion.ca).

you don't have to have served, you don't have to be related to anybody who served, you just need to want to contribute to your community. Kinda like the Kinsmen or the Lions. But the Legion has cheap beer and a meat draw. Right? So. There's your draw. Yeah so. No, the Legion's kinda fallen forward in their means and ability to help anyone.

Ian and Amber too attribute this drop in membership to a kind of "military neglect." They also told me that, consequently, the Legion had begun to reach out to younger veterans:

Ian: After I got out, I'd go to the Legion and I was basically told, you're not a veteran. You know veterans are somebody that fought in World War II.

Karen: So not only were you not in Yugoslavia—

Ian: Yeah. Exactly yeah. Not only was I not in Yugoslavia, when I was there I also felt like the Legion was basically saying "well we want nothing to do with you because you weren't, you know you're a peacekeeper Army. You weren't in the real world." And that's where the, that's sort of the uh—Years. It took me years to walk into a Legion after that. I really didn't want anything to do with them. But with the *NVMO*, and then we started doing the Poppy Fund and we started doing the—You know it kind of grew us back into the Legion a little bit more.

Amber: Well and the Legion is kind of coming around too. Saying all military members are veterans in some way. So.

Ian: Yeah so it has changed a lot. Especially—what was happening, all World War I vets are dead. All the World War II vets are dying. There's very few of anybody else left and the ones that are coming out, like even the Afghanistan veterans, they don't want to join the Legion. They want nothing to do with it. Because of years and years of...

Amber: Military neglect.

Ian: Yeah. Military neglect. From the Legion, right?

Ian's involvement with the veteran riding community, then, has helped him become more open to discussion with the Legion. Some effort at achieving improved mutual understanding between veterans of Canadian peacekeeping missions and the Legion seemed to be underway at the *NVMO* national headquarters level as well. At the

NVMO Annual General Meeting in the summer of 2013, for example, the organization's president told attendees about various ways in which the Legion has come to the NVMO for advice in their efforts to become relevant to younger veterans. The excerpt below is from my field journal, describing what he told attendees about headquarters' changing relationship with the Legion:

The Legion has begun to follow the example of the NVMO, to improve itself. The Legion wants the NVMO to be part of their world. They need the NVMO's help to do so. They need to see today's veteran. Not just yesterday's. President sent out feelers to Legions around the country to see how they are evolving. Says the results were mostly positive (Field notes August 3, 2013).

Towards its purpose of regaining relevance with younger veterans, he told attendees, the Legion had recently announced the formation of its own motorcycle units, the Canadian Legion Riders (2019b: legion.ca).

The veterans I spoke with usually acknowledged the Legion's recent efforts to bridge its damaged relationship with them. However, much like the Governor General's commendation for the veterans of United Nations Protection Force Yugoslavia, the Legion's current efforts to acknowledge Canadian Forces veterans of peacekeeping missions and to restore its relevance to them, while appreciated, appeared to have come too late for many veteran riding community members. Healing the secondary wounds inflicted by some of its members might well require further adjustments by the members of the Legion, by civilian and veteran members alike.

I have used Matsakis' concept of secondary wounding to examine veterans' accounts of re-traumatization following their release from the military. I have argued that secondary wounding occurred when veteran trauma survivors: 1) had their traumatic

experiences disbelieved, denied or discounted, 2) were blamed and/or stigmatized for their trauma, or, 3) were denied assistance by the military medical professionals, service members, friends, and other caregivers to whom they had gone to for emotional, financial, or medical help (1996). I have discussed three kinds of secondary wounding experiences: wounding by institutions including the Department of National Defence and Veterans Affairs Canada, wounding by civilians, and wounding by other veterans. Like the processes of release bereavement and dys-appearance of military skills and habits, I conceive of secondary wounding experiences as both isolating and dis-emplacing. Secondary wounding experiences, however, cannot be generalized to all veteran participants because all veteran participants did not self-identify as living with post-traumatic stress disorder or complex post-traumatic stress disorder sustained whilst serving.

A kind of antidote to secondary wounding in the form of lack of institutional, veteran, and civilian acknowledgement of Cold War and peacekeeping era veterans' contributions and sacrifices might exist in rituals of communalization (Shay 2004). Such rituals are healing for psychologically wounded veterans, according to Shay, because they include both veterans and civilians (excluding politicians and bureaucrats). Moreover, they enable enough of veterans' experiences to be heard, voiced, and understood to generate between veterans and civilians a sense of mutual humaneness, or a mutual sense of belonging (2004). Rituals of communalization thereby mitigate wounded veterans' sense of isolation and dis-emplacement. Chapters Seven and Eight include examples of riding community practices that similarly played a role in healing some of the harm

sustained by veterans as a result of secondary wounding experiences and other aspects of the processes of dis-empowerment, which include release bereavement and the dys-appearance of military skills and habits. Chapters Five and Six of this thesis have explored the problem and processes of dis-empowerment. Chapter Seven and Eight will explore what I believe to be at least part the solution, the processes of re-empowerment.

Chapter Seven: Re-emplacement on the Road in a Community of Mobilized Practice

In previous chapters I have identified challenges surrounding veteran riding community members' release from the military. Specifically, these are challenges related to release bereavement, dys-appearing military skills and habits, and secondary wounding. I have argued that experiences of these challenges often dislodged, or, recalling Basso, unseated most veteran riding community members' sense of emplacement (1996). Military release, to varying degrees, was dis-emplacing for NVMO veterans across a range of military career trajectories and experiences. In this chapter, I discuss the re-emplacing qualities of the NVMO. If dis-emplacement following military release is the problem, I argue that participation in the NVMO, for many veterans, has provided some resolution. Using Lave and Wenger's conception of a community of practice, I will explore participation in the NVMO as comprising a process of re-emplacement through shared mobilities (Millka 1992; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Shelley and Urry 2006; Jensen 2009; Cresswell 2010a; Cresswell 2010b).

In the following sections, I will address the practice of motorcycle riding with a group as capable of, at least for the duration of any given ride, restoring dys-appearing military skills and habits to a functional and non-disruptive state (Leder 1990). I will discuss connections between participation in riding community activities and attenuation of some of the isolating experiences of release bereavement. I will also approach as transformative aspects of various NVMO practices and rituals related to motorcycle riding, including; the telling of and listening to riding and war stories, and, the witnessing of and participation in cresting ceremonies. Lastly, I will approach supporter/veteran

interaction in the NVMO as capable of mitigating some veterans' assumptions of the impossibility of "communicative sociality"—successful communication wherein people share an experience and all parties participate in that interaction non-self-consciously and as co-subjects—in their encounters with civilians (Leder 1990: 94). These kinds of interactions, I argue, provided a kind of scaffolding upon which some veterans could engage with the harmful effects of their secondary wounding experiences. Informed by Jean Lave and Étienne Wenger's concept of communities of practice, I approach each of these learning processes as significant for the transformation of retired Canadian Forces members into members of the veteran riding community (1991: 29). Some discussion of the concept of a community of practice, and its connection to the processes of mobility and place making, is therefore appropriate.

Rather than defining community by the space that people occupy together such as a neighbourhood or a workplace, or, by certain characteristics of a population—for example, ethnicity, class, gender, sexual or religious orientation—a community of practice is defined by Lave and Wenger around people's mutual participation in interests that they share (Lave and Wenger 1991; Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992b: 464). Accordingly, Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet describe a community of practice as, "an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour" (1992b: 464). People who work together in a factory can be a community of practice, as can "regulars in a bar, a neighbourhood play group, a nuclear family, or police partners..." (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992a: 8). In this chapter I am approaching the NVMO, an aggregate of people who gathered around shared interest in

riding motorcycles and the military, as a community of mobility practice. Over time, and in relation to other communities of practice, participants come to “share understandings” about how to practice and what participation means for them and for the community (Lave and Wenger 1991: 98). These shared understandings also play a role in the ways in which participants come to understand themselves and relate to each other and to the world (1991: 98).

Lave and Wenger argue that the processes of learning do not take place exclusively in structured settings designed for teaching. Instead, the authors situate the processes of learning within contexts (or communities) of co-participation in shared endeavour. Learning, they argue, is “an aspect of all activity,” including activities designed without conventionally pedagogical motivations (1991: 38). This de-isolation of the processes of learning is integral to their concept of a community of practice. To analyze the processes of learning in situated contexts of co-participation over time, the authors use the term “legitimate peripheral participation” (1991: 29).

Learning viewed as situated activity has as its central defining characteristic a process that we call legitimate peripheral participation. By this we mean to draw attention to the point that learners inevitably participate in communities of practitioners and that the mastery of knowledge and skill requires newcomers to move toward full participation in the sociocultural practices of a community. Legitimate peripheral participation provides a way to speak about the relations between newcomers and old-timers, and about activities, identities, artifacts, and communities of knowledge and practice. It concerns the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice (1991: 29).

Learning then, from this perspective, occurs across a continuum of participation in activity with other people. Indeed, for Lave and Wenger, learning and participation are synonymous.

Rather than an internalized process, learning as legitimate peripheral participation (LPP) involves the whole person acting in the world (1991: 49-50). Because participation always involves negotiating and renegotiating meaning in particular arenas of engagement, “understanding and experience” come to constitute each other (1991: 52). “The notion of participation,” argue Lave and Wenger, consequently dissolves “dichotomies between cerebral and embodied activity...” (1991: 52). Following Lave and Wenger then, I interpret participation in various veteran riding community activities—motorcycle riding in particular—as learning, phenomenologically defined. I approach Legitimate Peripheral Participation in the NVMO (a community of practice) as contributing to its constitution as a mobilized place. Learning here is another ‘kind of thing’—like shared notions surrounding inside-ness and outside-ness, the social processes of everyday practical activity, memories, thoughts and languages—that place gathers, and holds coherently in an arena of engagement (Casey 1996: 26).

According to Lave and Wenger, the interaction of legitimacy, peripherality and participation generates the “landscape” of community membership (1991: 35). Legitimate participation describes access to opportunities to participate in a community of practitioners; including, access to fully participating “old-timers” who may manage resources, information, additional responsibility in the community, and further opportunities for participation (1991: 56). The notion of legitimate participation thereby takes into account dynamics of power in communities of practice. “Hegemony over resources for learning and alienation from full participation,” argue Lave and Wenger, “are inherent in the shaping of legitimacy... of participation” (1991: 42). In the NVMO,

fully participating members might include, for example, executive officers who review membership applications, plan and organize NVMO rides and related events, and who model the shared value orientations of the community to new members.

Legitimate participation is also an evolving form of membership (1991: 53).

Peripherality, according to Lave and Wenger, indicates the shifting nature of social relationships of legitimate participation in a community of practice over time:

Peripherality suggests that there are multiple, varied, more—or less—engaged and inclusive ways of being located in the fields of participation defined by a community. Peripheral participation is about being located in the social world. Changing locations and perspectives are part of actors' learning trajectories, developing identities, and forms of membership (1991: 35-36).

While the authors describe participation as a continuum of engagement evolving between “partial” (or peripheral) participation and “full participation,” importantly, they insist that partial participation is very relevant to the operation of practical activity in a community of practice (1991: 36). Also, the authors do not designate areas of a community of practice as either “the periphery” or the “centre.” The periphery in this context is instead meant to indicate practical knowledge, experience and understanding that new members will gain through “growing involvement” (1991: 37). It indicates the dynamic nature of membership in which newcomers are continuously becoming old-timers.

The dynamic operation of this continuum of engagement can also produce conflict as newcomers introduce diverse viewpoints and experiences to a community of practice, or, replace existing old-timers along their journey towards full participation (1991: 114). The authors refer to this friction inherent in the relationships of legitimate peripheral participation as a continuity-displacement contradiction (1991: 112). How these tensions

become resolved, argue Lave and Wenger, usually depends on the relations of power between newcomers and old-timers in a particular community. Such tensions constantly produce change, however, and play an important role in the social reproduction of the community.

According to the authors, tension between newcomers and old-timers gets worked out in everyday practical activity because the relationships of legitimate peripheral participation are inter-related and dependent upon one another. Moreover, for newcomers, participation is about more than the acquisition of skills (1991: 116). It is about access to hope in future possibilities⁵⁶ (Jackson 2008: vx). In the case studies reviewed by Lave and Wenger, legitimate access to communities of practice was valuable to newcomers because it represented a space of appearances; where people were afforded the opportunity to take the “given potentialities” of their environment and make them into “the means to some kind of end worth living for” (Jackson 2008: vx, 15). Accordingly, among new veteran riding community members, legitimate peripheral participation was about regaining access to a sense of emplacement that had eluded them since their release from the military (Lave and Wenger 1991: 35). The potential for regaining that sense of emplacement rendered participation valuable, and worth the energy it cost to work out conflict.⁵⁷ The practice itself of being and becoming a veteran old-timer relied upon new members continuously embarking upon journeys towards full participation in the NVMO.

⁵⁶ Chapter One, Existentiality in place, includes more discussion about Jackson’s concept of the space of appearances.

⁵⁷ Less frequently conflict was worked out only through separation of members from the community.

Participation, the second ‘P’ in ‘Legitimate Peripheral Participation’ and synonymous with learning, is meaningful to newcomers because learning in communities of practice is simultaneously a process of identification (Lave and Wenger 1991: 122). In legitimate peripheral participation, newcomers learn to be community members:

The person has been correspondingly transformed into a practitioner, a newcomer becoming an old-timer, whose changing knowledge, skill, and discourse are part of a developing identity—in short, a member of a community of practice. This idea of identity/membership is strongly tied to a conception of motivation. If the person is both member of a community and agent of activity, the concept of the person closely links meaning and action in the world (Lave and Wenger 1991: 122).

In the NVMO, newcomers learned to be veteran bikers. Their journey of becoming was simultaneously an experience of belonging, to a new (albeit familiar) community. Lave and Wenger, as I have mentioned earlier, argue that Legitimate Peripheral Participation concerns “the process by which newcomers become part of a community of practice” (1991: 29). In the sections that follow, I will discuss the social processes through which new veteran members became part of the riding community, and contend that for many of the veterans I got to know, learning-participation in the riding community, over time, was re-emplacing. I refer to these social processes as the freedom nexus, the de-isolation of loss, witnessing transformation, and bridging the understanding gap. I begin with riding community members’ shared ideas about freedom and the road.

7.1 The Freedom Nexus

My conception of a freedom nexus draws on Raymond Michalowski and Jill Dubisch’s perspective on negative and positive expressions of freedom (2001: 122-124). According to the authors, American popular culture has historically used the image of the open road

to express ideas about freedom. The notion of the open road, they argue, was itself derived from (erroneous) notions of a historically empty and lawless American frontier. Mastery of this frontier through self-reliance and “a sense of community with others” who inhabit it on “the margins of the larger society” informed expressions and representations of what popular culture suggested it meant to be free of everyday bureaucratic, economic or family constraints (2001: 122). Michalowski and Dubisch further suggest that this image of freedom has, over time, enfolded within it the notion of constraint placed upon individuals by government in contexts of speech, media, religion or an individual’s personal purchasing power (2001: 122). The road then, informed by this colonial image of the American frontier, offers a ‘somewhere’ to which the individual may go to escape the interference of (sometimes more powerful) others. American popular culture, they argue, has historically mobilized the image of the motorcycle to represent one means of getting there:

The road has come to symbolize a place where all possibilities lie ahead, where nothing in our past can stop us, and where our aloneness ensures that there is no one to intrude on our private journey. This is why scenes of empty roads stretching into the distance are typical fare whenever movies, TV shows, or advertisements want to say something about freedom. There are no houses, no other vehicles, no signs of civilization, nothing to intrude. This same set of cultural images links motorcycles and freedom in biker culture (2001: 123)

Michalowski and Dubisch write about a group of American veterans of the Vietnam War who got together every year to ride their motorcycles from the west coast of the United States to Washington DC, culminating in a visit to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial (2001). Members of the veterans riding community in Calgary have similarly connected motorcycle riding with escape from the constraints of everyday life.

Motorcycle riding in response to perceptions of constraint is an example of the expression of what Michalowski and Dubisch refer to as negative freedom, or “freedom from” (2001: 122-123). According to veteran riding community members, riding together generated a sense of freedom from the intrusive experience of dys-appearance (Leder 1991).

The practice of riding with other members offered some veterans relief, at least for the duration of any given outing, from dys-appearing military skills and habits that sometimes interrupted their everyday lives in civilian arenas of engagement (Leder 1991). Motorcycle riding offered relief because of its inherent hazardousness. In their comments below, Ian and Amber discuss the connection between risk, riding and the mitigation of a sense of loss following Ian’s retirement from the Canadian Forces:

Ian: Motorcycling is a risk. To be honest with ya. It still has that element of danger that we’re missing. That, you know, we can’t go get shot at. We can’t go play in minefields anymore. So what do you have, right? They frown upon us speeding through the streets. I don’t know, I still do it a little bit. But uh yeah you know, but that’s all a part of it. That’s why you ride a bike. That’s why you jump out of perfectly serviceable airplanes. Right? It’s, you get sort of attached to some of the thrill part too and the camaraderie.

Amber: A little bit of the adrenaline.

Ian: Yeah you still have that and that’s all part of it. And that’s sort of what, the binding factor I think as well in some of these groups is when the guys get out and they stop and then that’s something that’s all of a sudden missing you know it’s not there... Like when you’re *[riding a motorcycle]*... you’re going around this way trying to dodge and of course oncoming traffic is coming up there too. And it’s not like you can stop that quick. And then all of a sudden you see the other guy just disappeared. And you’re going, oh shit! You do get massive adrenaline rushes when you walk back from a vehicle and it blows up beside ya. You know or you’re standing in a minefield. That’s pretty—you know stuff like that, so you start getting—that’s part of it you know that’s why I like riding a bike you know it still gives you that little thrill...

Colin similarly described both the camaraderie of riding with other veterans and the

opportunity to voluntarily place himself in a slightly risky or stressful situation as helpful to the process of transitioning from active soldier to retired veteran:

Karen: So what is it about the bike?

Colin: The freedom. Hanging out with guys havin' fun. Gettin' the wind in your face and uh havin' fun. And the freedom, you know? Bein' on your own and getting out there. Not stuck in a car or in traffic.

Karen: There seems to be something about riding and veterans.

Colin: Yeah. The way [*names another veteran member*] described it to me is because we were in high risk situations. High stress because of our jobs in the military. That we can appreciate a little bit of danger like riding a bike. Being out there not being protected like in a car. Having to watch things, you know, like a car stopping or cutting us off or something like that. That's kind of good for us because we're on a bike and we're in little bit of a stressful situation more than safe in a car. So it helps.

Karen: Is it correct to say that to a degree you're maintaining some of those soldiering skills?

Colin: Oh yeah. Oh yeah!

Karen: And that's a part of who you are so letting go of that—the transition would be made easier by being able to hold onto some of those skills?

Colin: Yes.

Colin's reference to having to "watch things" while he rode his motorcycle recalls some examples of hyper-vigilance and hyper-alertness intrusions—experiences of dys-appearing military skills and habits—that I discussed in Chapter Five. Dysfunctional in civilian contexts like a restaurant or coffee shop, vigilance and alertness are completely appropriate on the road. Moreover, failing to be sufficiently vigilant and alert on a motorcycle could potentially lead to serious injury or death. I believe that, through membership, newcomers to the veterans riding community learned and practiced freedom

from, at least for the duration of a ride, intrusive experiences of dys-appearing skills and habits that were incorporated⁵⁸ during their military service. Moreover, for Ian and Colin, such experiences of negative freedom seemed to provide a temporary measure of relief from some of the conditions of dis-emplacement.

Seeking to understand the allure of motorcycling despite the risks established both by experts and motorcyclists' own encounters on the road, some social scientists have written about voluntary participation in potentially hazardous activities (Lyng 1990; Bellaby and Lawrenson 2001; Natalier 2001; Librett 2008). These researchers argue that rather than being ignorant or disdainful of the hazards that statistics represent, the motorcyclists who participated in their research cited embodied knowledge gained through their riding experience and in interaction with other riders as constituting the meaning they attach to risk (Lyng 1990; Bellaby and Lawrenson 2001; Natalier 2001). According to Kristin Natalier, regarding motorcyclists in the UK, technique and experience inform a shared notion of control *over* risk:

Control is the ability to foresee and navigate potential hazards, thus erasing risk in a material way... The experience of control emphasizes the relevance of the motorcyclists' own knowledge and, in some circumstances, denies the applicability of other expert knowledge. Fundamentally, control is about technique but it also incorporates practical measures of self-protection... Protection is valued because it enables the rider to concentrate on technique, thus avoiding accidents (2001: 71).

Technique, for Natalier's participants, was refined through riding but informed both formally through mandatory coursework and more casually through conversations and interactions with other riders (2001: 70).

⁵⁸ I am referring here to Leder's conception of incorporation (1991). Chapter 5.2, *bodies out of place*, includes more detailed discussion of the process of the incorporating skills.

At the time of my research, the government of Alberta strongly recommended that new riders complete a safety course on motorcycle operation (www.transportation.alberta.ca). Several members including myself took the same course, which included both lecture and practical components. Executive officers in the riding community likewise encouraged new riders to take a safety course, and invited the owner of a local riding school to a monthly meeting to introduce the school to new members. Members of the NVMO who signed up at the meeting were offered a discounted fee for the course. The owner told us it represented his desire to “give back” to the veteran community, his way of showing gratitude for veteran riding community members’ contributions and sacrifices during their military service. It is my opinion that the accumulation of various such encounters over time, encounters that the veteran riding community made available for members, may have played a (limited) role in the interruption of distrust that various veteran members had developed for civilians as a result of secondary wounding experiences.⁵⁹

New riders in the NVMO were also encouraged to wear protective gear whilst riding, behaviour modeled by executive officers and other old-timers in the community. Accordingly, most riders wore protective jackets, pants and gloves. As is required by law, all riders wore helmets although riders did choose helmets with varying degrees of protection. Some riders chose full-face protection, for example, while others preferred three quarter or no face protection. Following Natalier, members’ attention to safety and

⁵⁹ I discuss in more detail the role I believe the riding community to have played in narrowing civilian-veteran understanding gaps later in this chapter.

the wearing of protective gear contributed to riders' technique, helping them to exert control. The application of technique in order to achieve control—the application of their embodied knowledge—informed their perceptions of the risks associated with riding⁶⁰ (2001: 73). Learning control in this sense, combined with learning how to experience freedom from experiences of dys-appearance, perhaps rendered the hazards associated with motorcycling reported by experts worth the risk for veteran riding community members.

In addition to the satisfaction of exercising embodied knowledge to control risk, some social scientists note the social appeal of motorcycling. Michalowski and Dubisch cite for example the “emotional intensity of riding” in rough weather conditions as potentially recreating the kind of intense bonding experiences generated in combat situations (2001: 169). Sharing hardships of the road like slippery asphalt, or feeling cold, hot, or wet because of the rain or the snow yet navigating the challenges successfully generated for the veterans in their ethnography a sense of accomplishment. Listening to and telling stories about these accomplishments later, amongst themselves, further secured bonds of friendship (2001: 168). On numerous occasions, often at the pub for lunch following a morning of riding, I similarly listened to veterans reminisce about close calls, dangerous road conditions, and accidents they had experienced together on the road.

Further social aspects of membership in the riding community that offered veteran

⁶⁰ According to Natalier, the motorcyclists in her study used the notion of control to create grounds for marginalizing the hazards associating with motorcycling, “when even a cursory knowledge of the statistics in association with their own accidents and close calls... renders their interpretation unsupportable” (2001: 77).

riders some relief, or freedom from, particular conditions of dis-emplacement⁶¹ include: the hierarchical organizational structure of the NVMO, “scheduled recreational activities,” and the habit of wearing particular “modes of dress” (Librett 2008: 257-268; Michalowski and Dubisch 2001: 168). Each were practices familiar to veterans from their time in the Canadian Forces. Part of the appeal of membership, according to some veterans, was in fact this familiarity. Veterans also cited the military style of organizing they encountered in the NVMO, as well as members’ commitment to the accomplishment of tasks, as a relief from the intrusion of dys-appearing military skills and habits, which they sometimes experienced in civilian workplaces.⁶²

In addition to freedom from experiences of dys-appearing military skills and habits, some described participation (the process of newcomers learning to be old-timers) in the riding community as freeing from the constraint of stressful thoughts. In response to my question about why veterans and motorcycles seem to make a good match, Jack described riding as a reactive, pre-representational experience:

Jack: For me, it’s just the enjoyment of being on the road and riding. I mean my biggest—and this may be why the military likes it so much—is because, for me, I don’t think of anything else. I ride, I think about riding. Everything else just goes out of my mind, it’s a big stress relief for me, I just get away from day to day life and I don’t think about anything else. So when I’m on my bike, I’m on my bike. And that’s it. So I shut everything else down and all I think about is what I’m doing that day. Even if it’s, we stop for lunch, you know, I’m talking to the guys, we’re talking about the ride, anything else like that, my day to day life never comes into my mind. So that might be part of the reason why they ride. Because they have more to escape than in general? So they may be trying to use that—and that might be what it is. It just, it gets them away from what they have to think

⁶¹ Chapters Five and Six include detailed discussion of the conditions of post-release dis-emplacement.

⁶² Chapter Five includes detailed discussion of the experience of dys-appearing military skills and habits

about all the time. So that's just one way of escaping.

Karen: If your thoughts... kind of are chasing you—

Jack: Yeah exactly. And that's a good way to get away from that.

I interpret Jack's suggestion that some veteran riding community members had "more to escape than in general" to be a reference to intrusive, repeating or potentially traumatic memories and stress resulting from secondary wounding experiences; but also everyday worries related to work and family. Gabriel Jderu suggests that engagement of technique and exertion of control, necessary to operating a motorcycle at high speeds, similarly effects a kind of embodied present-ness capable of shutting out thoughts about both the past and the future (Jderu 2015: 426, also see Natalier 2001). "Sometimes, when riding," suggests Jderu, "the speed, combined with the exposed condition of the body, generates an ecstatic feeling that modifies the perception of time and space" (2015: 426). Jderu and Jack's description of riding recalls Csordas' perspective on culture analyzed phenomenologically, immediate reaction to the environment before the motorcyclist has consciously regarded their experience (Csordas 1994: 270). According to Jack, this embodied aspect of riding could temporarily provide relief from stressful thoughts.

In their ethnography about American veteran bikers, Michalowski and Dubisch address positive freedom as well, which they describe as "freedom to" (2001: 224). More specifically, the authors refer to motorcycling as having provided for participants the freedom to "develop self-awareness or find emotional peace" (2001: 124). Based on my conversations with veteran riding community members, riding offered positive freedom somewhat similarly in the NVMO. However, recalling my discussion earlier on Lave and

Wenger's conception of legitimate peripheral learning in a community of practice, I have approached positive freedom here as also the freedom to become a "kind of person"; a process of identification that takes place over time, generated through engagement with others in shared endeavour (1991: 53, 122). In the process of riding together, old-timers helped newcomers learn to be veteran riding community members.

Veteran riding community members described themselves to me as busy people who are organized and share a sense of accomplishment and purpose. They also emphasized the prerogative to ride and have fun together, including simply enjoying the camaraderie and the sensations of the road. According to Greg, the prerogative to ride and have fun was rendered more meaningful due to his experiences in the military:

A veteran and a bike is a good match because it's freedom. That's what you fight for and that's what you like. You like the thing of being on that bike all by yourself or with your wife or your girlfriend and you're free. There's nothing around you but you and that bike. And it's just nice being able to just you know ride. You've been on a bike, you know what it's like... You're looking around, it's things—you're in a car, it's a total different feeling... But when you're out there and the wind's in your face and wind's whipping around ya like, it's like, oh that's a different feeling. Even [*names his wife*] was like oh that's kind of neat. It's a whole different feeling... Difference calm, difference all together. But they belong together. I think.

Greg participated in numerous overseas operations throughout his military career, including theatres of combat. His comments are relevant here because they exemplify the significance of riding as a visceral and emotional experience to many veterans. Unlike car drivers who ride inside a steel chassis for example, veteran riding members from Greg's perspective are people who are free to feel the road directly and immediately.

In addition to being people who are free to feel the road, riding community members described themselves as people who were busy. When I asked Jack about the

longevity of the local NVMO unit for example, he attributed it to riding community members' purposeful engagement in riding and veteran related activities together:

Okay that's like a really hard question. I think, I think it's mostly—actually I think it really does come down to the camaraderie. And the interaction that we have. The fact that we stay busy. Okay? The fact that we're not just sitting around all the time and uh we do things. We stay busy, we do things like riding and everything like that... I don't think there's any one really—way of saying we are successful because of this. I think it's just the group of people we have been able to work together, stay busy and we get together and have fun it's not all serious business.

Quinn answered similarly. When I asked why she preferred spending time with the riding community to spending time with other veteran communities with which she was involved, she too cited engagement. With other groups, she told me, “basically all they do is they meet up every Sunday for breakfast.” When I asked if she sometimes attended she told me, “no. I don't want—not my idea of belonging to a riding club if you're gonna go in a frickin' restaurant.”

Being engaged, then, stood out as an important part of how veterans defined membership, and themselves, in the riding community (Wenger 2000: 227). Organization, an aspect of engagement shared by veteran riding community members and formerly incorporated⁶³ in the military, was also self-defining. Below, Colin explains how familiar ways of doing things helped him:

The best thing that helped me was the *NVMO*. Bein' around military people that were in the military. Knowing you can trust them. And they were organized. And we hung out together. We could relate to each other. That was the best therapy. The medication, I was on tonnes of medication. That didn't help me. And now that I've been with the *NVMO* I'm really startin' to feel that bond again and appreciate it. And get back on my feet... I just think we uh, we—from our experiences we can work together and uh we can get things done. And we enjoy

⁶³ See footnote number 58.

each other's company. So uh it's a tight knit group of people... We're playing by the rules. We're very organized. And that was good for me... It took some time but it's good therapy. And getting on the bike—that has been the best for me.

Engagement in motorcycle riding, amongst people he trusted who were organized and accomplished tasks in familiar ways, played an important role in Colin's journey from newcomer to veteran riding community member; and, helped formulate his definition of membership.

Another facet of being organized, according to Colin, is members' capacity to "get things done". I interpret getting things done in the NVMO to mean arranging and running fundraising and remembrance events to benefit veterans and their families. This aspect of self-identification as a veteran riding community member may too have had implications for some veterans living with post-traumatic stress disorder. Ronit Kishon-Barash, Elizabeth Midlarsky and David R. Johnson studied connections between post-traumatic stress disorder symptomology and the desire to help others (1999: 656). Based on their research with American veterans of the Vietnam War who had been diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder, the authors suggest that altruism may help with the alleviation of stress:

Although help intentions and altruistic helping may lead to the alleviation of symptoms, obversely, distress may impede altruism. Most likely, perhaps, there is a cyclical relationship wherein compassionate helping can distract the distressed individual from egocentric concerns. With lessened egocentric concerns and the consequent alleviation of distress, altruistic help intentions and help giving can result more readily—leading, in turn, to more alleviation of distress (1999: 661).

Accordingly, the practice of engagement and organization by this community may have contributed in positive ways to veterans' experiences of stress sustained whilst serving and/or as a result of secondary wounding experiences following their military release.

As stated in the NVMO mandate, “ride, have fun while helping others,” community officers organized a ride for members most weekends during the riding season. Occasionally, these rides served dual purposes: to have fun and to raise money. The riding community usually participated in rides organized to fundraise in support of veterans and their families. There were some rare exceptions, including the Ride For Dad in support of prostate cancer. Off the bike, the riding community likewise organized fundraising events. On the off-season, such events included a Show ‘n Shine⁶⁴ and a booth at the Calgary Bike Expo where members volunteered to sell merchandise for the local Military Family Resource Centre. Members also collected toys for the local Military Family Resources Centre at their Christmas Party and helped guide runners and control traffic for the Loops For Troops 10K and 5K run. Registration fees for the run supported a local veterans group. The riding community was always very active during the month of November as well: designing and providing most of the labour for the placement of crosses at the annual Field of Crosses installation, collecting food for the Veterans Food Bank, and, talking to local schoolchildren about remembrance (to be discussed in more detail in Chapter Eight).

According to many of the veterans I spoke with, participation in these kinds of activities restored to their everyday lives a sense of purpose they had felt was missing since their retirement from military service. Following Kishon-Barash, Midlarsky, and Johnson, participation in such practices may have also related, and in constructive ways,

⁶⁴ Riding community members, and bikers who were not members, put their motorcycles on display for members of the public to view and rate. Interested vendors in the city and organizations that worked with veterans’ issues also attended.

to their experiences of operational and transition stress. Moreover, again recalling Lave and Wenger, veterans like Quinn, Greg and Colin participated in the practices of engagement and organization in the riding community and simultaneously identified such participation as characteristic of their membership; over time, they became new kinds of people who were free to feel the road with a sense of shared purpose.

My intention has been to explore the capacity of community members' participation in shared activity to be simultaneously a process of identification. From the perspective of legitimate peripheral participation in communities of practice, retired Canadian Forces members' engagement in activities like riding and helping others through fundraising and other activities was simultaneously an expression of positive freedom: to practice being and becoming veteran riding community members (Lave and Wenger 1991: 53). Moreover, I believe the opportunities to express negative and positive forms of freedom made possible by membership in the NVMO—freedom from dys-appearing military skills and habits and stressful thoughts, and, freedom to become new kinds of people—were emplacing.

What emerges from this discussion of a freedom nexus is the generation of place (and a sense of emplacement) through engagement in a mobilized community of practice. I refer to this arena of engagement, which gathered the practice of motorcycle riding and all the relationships and practices associated with it, as the road (even though the road includes activities that do not occur exclusively whilst motorcycling on highways, motorways and streets). My conception of the road as a place is informed by the work of

various social scientists who study mobilities (Millka 1992; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Shelley and Urry 2006; Jensen 2009; Cresswell 2010a; Cresswell 2010b).

According to Tim Cresswell, mobilities studies bring together approaches to forms of movement—of people, objects, information, capital and ideas—that had previously been studied separately by diverse disciplines (Cresswell 2010b: 18; Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006: 1). Mobilities studies approach forms of movement across a range of scales as well, “from the body... to the globe” (2010b: 18). Cresswell defines mobility as, “the entanglement of movement, representation, and practice” (2010b: 19).

Movement in this context of this study refers to the physical movement of people, objects, information, capital or ideas, for example, between various geographic locations (Hannam, Sheller, Urry 2006: 1; Cresswell 2010b: 19). Representation, according to Cresswell, is that which gives movement shared meaning (2010b: 19). Examples include representations of movement as liberating, as I have addressed in my discussion of the operation of the freedom nexus in the NVMO (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001). Alternatively, movement may be represented as threatening or problematic, as examined by Liisa Malkki (1992) in her discussion of the connections between conceptions of the territorialisation of national identity and the generalization and problematization of refugees. As addressed by Phillip Pinch and Suzanne Reimer in their discussion of motorcycling, movement may also be represented as gendered (2012). Cresswell describes practice as the experience and embodiment of movement (2010b: 20). This is movement phenomenologically, the affective, visceral and emotional experience of movement (Spinney 2006; Cresswell 2010b; Pinch and Reimer 2012).

As mobilities approaches pay attention to the ways in which movement, representation and practice are entangled, they also track the relations of power that are produced and embedded within those aspects of mobility (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Cresswell 2010b: 20). “Analysing mobilities,” argue Kevin Hannam, Mimi Sheller and John Urry, “involves examining many consequences for different peoples and places located in what we might call the fast and slow lanes of social life” (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 11). That which enhances the mobility of some, may reinforce the immobility of others (Sheller and Urry 2006: 213). Important questions for tracking the dynamics of power in contexts of mobility include why, and how fast, a person or thing moves⁶⁵ (Cresswell 2010b: 22-23).

Unlike people who are not mobile by choice—homeless individuals, or refugees and immigrants fleeing political violence, for example—veteran riding community members chose to ride their motorcycles for leisure and pleasure (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 11). They rode to experience positive and negative forms of freedom and to transform themselves into different kinds of people (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001; Lave and Wenger 1991). The speed of their movement was certainly limited by traffic laws, but whilst in formation, they usually chose to ride at a comfortable cruising speed. They could ride as they wanted and when they wanted, although their riding was seasonal, and sometimes at the mercy of inclement weather. Their mobility may therefore

⁶⁵ According to Cresswell, a proper politics of mobility must ask six questions of any form of mobility. These include, (1) “why does a person or thing move?” (2) “how fast does a person or thing move?” (3) “in what rhythm does a person or thing move?” (4) “what route does it take?” (5) “how does it feel?” and (6) “when and how does it stop?” (2010b: 22-26).

be categorized as more flow than friction, taking place in the “fast lanes of social life” (Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 11; Jensen 2009: 154).

Emphasis on the point that social processes operate within contexts of mobility is another aspect of the mobilities approach (Jensen 2009; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006). Analysis from the perspective of mobilities studies challenges “sedentarist” approaches that treat fixity and stability as normal and natural characteristics of place, whilst approaching “deterritorialized” states as unnatural or place-less (Milkka 1992; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 5; Jensen 2009). The mobilities perspective also seeks to complicate theories of nomadism that celebrate “travel and flight” (Sheller and Urry 2006: 210). Mobilities researchers like Ole B. Jensen and Liisa Milkka have further argued that both sedentarist and deterritorialized approaches to mobility have, conventionally, tended to carry a sense of moral judgement. According to Jensen, an alternative to setting sedentary thinking in opposition to de-territorialized thinking is to conceptualize them, “without moral pre-judgment,” as “relationally interdependent”; since, in the course of everyday practical activity, people inhabit both (2009: 146). This alternative approach makes it possible to locate social processes not exclusively in “spatially fixed geographical containers” but also during travel time on motorways, highways or streets, for example (Jensen 2009; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006: 5). It is this perspective on mobilities that informs my conceptualization of the road—in which NVMO members participated in numerous social processes of re-emplacement and identification—as a mobile place.

Philip Pinch and Suzanne Reimer argue that while social scientists have, since the early 2000s, increasingly been producing work about automobility—which has been described by Sheller and Urry as “a complex amalgam of interlocking machines, social practices and ways of dwelling”—much of that work has focused on car driving (Sheller and Urry 2000: 739; Pinch and Reimer 2012: 440). The authors suggest that comparatively little work has been produced that focuses on mobility in the context of motorcycle riding (2012: 440). They address what sets motorcycling apart from driving cars in the context of mobility, and include aspects of representation and practice in their discussion (2012: 440; Cresswell 2010b). Motorcycling in Euro-North America, they argue, has largely been represented as male—although such representation is informed by various masculinities—and liberating, informed by colonial notions of the frontier (2012: 445-449; Michalowski and Dubisch 2001). Pinch and Reimer further argue that most available research on motorcycling in the context of a focus on mobility has attended to Euro-North America, where motorcyclists mostly ride for leisure and pleasure. Consequently, the authors suggest that more needs to be understood about the ways in which riding is represented cross-culturally (2012: 453). An exception they do not mention includes Allison Truitt’s work on motorcycling in the context of middle-class mobility in Vietnam (2008).

Pinch and Reimer also discuss motorcycling as involving a different form of embodiment than driving a car (Sheller 2004). They argue that motorcycling, unlike driving a car, involves, “profound engagement” with the geography and the environment through which the motorcyclist is travelling, and requires instantaneous reactions to both

(2009: 443). The authors describe how the social and economic processes involved in motorcycle mobility differ from the processes of mobility in the context of driving a car, making a compelling argument as to why more understanding of mobility in the context of “powered two-wheeled vehicles” will embellish mobilities studies in general. While they attend to the uniquely visceral physicality of the processes of embodiment in the context of motorcycle mobility, they pay less attention to the connections between such embodiment and sense of emplacement (Pinch and Reimer 2012: 444).

In the context of the NVMO, while sense of place on the road was not exclusively affective, important aspects of it were. According to Spinney, “we create meaning and belong in a place according to how we are in a place” (2006: 709). On the road, veteran riding community members were frequently in motion. As described by Ian, Greg and Colin, the process of applying technique and exerting control whilst riding a motorcycle was a sensory one; whereby thoughts about the past and future were superseded by the immediacy of keeping one’s bike from falling over (Jderu 2015: 426; Spinney 2006: 712; Pinch and Reimer 2012: 444). Spinney refers to this as “prerepresentational,” “practical engagement with the world,” wherein “meaning is created and identity is formed,” at least in part, “in the act of doing” (Spinney 2006: 712). Consequently, he argues, it is difficult to articulate embodied experience to non-practicing others. Spinney writes from the perspective of a bicyclist ascending a mountain, but I believe it was similarly difficult for veterans to articulate the embodied experience of riding to non-riders, or, the many embodied aspects of dis-emplacement to civilians (2006: 227).

I conceive of the freedom-nexus, in part, as a way to articulate such embodied experiences. One of the emplacing qualities of the road then was also its capacity as a place to gather mobilized sense-memory (Bennett 2002: 335), wherein veterans shared the affective impact of not just release bereavement and experiences of dys-appearing skills and habits, but also the affective impact of the processes of mitigating those conditions of dis-emplacement. Hannam, Sheller and Urry argue that people and places constitute each other through activity (2006: 13). If we apply this notion to the NVMO, then the road constitutes veteran riding members as veteran riding members constitute the road—gathering civilians, veterans, motorcycles, highways, motorways, streets and kit, along with the emplacing, somatic and emotional processes that give the freedom nexus meaning, into a mobile arena of inter-connection; a place.

7.2 De-isolating loss

As part of his explanation of bodies in the process of dys-appearing, Leder describes pain as isolating. It “strikes alone” he writes, “marked by an interiority that another cannot share” (1991: 74). Leder uses the example of a tennis player experiencing a heart attack during a tennis match to demonstrate how the interruption of one party’s pain can instantly sever any connection they had previously been sharing with another individual (1991: 74). As soon as physical pain interrupts the tennis player’s match, they must stop sharing the experience of the game, to focus exclusively on their solitary pain. I have discussed in previous chapters various ways in which the embodied processes of dis-emplacement similarly interrupted veterans’ life-worlds, causing them to experience isolation in civilian public and work places. I argue that veteran riding community

members created opportunities to share their experiences of dis-emplacement with each other, and that such communion sometimes played a role in mitigating the sense of isolation some had experienced since their retirement from the military (Leder 1991: 97).

Jackson's perspective on signification⁶⁶ describes one path towards such communion (2008: xxvii). "Best understood as a process of transforming lived experiences that are apprehended as 'private,' or singularly one's own, into *forms that can be shared*," he describes "the act of signifying" as a way of mediating communion and socially making sense of memories and experiences; for example, through conversation with other people (2008: xxvii). The road (as a mobile place) offered new community members access to other members' shared and similar experiences; including those experiential, sensory memories of being in the military and retiring from it that were difficult to articulate to non-members, yet made sense to other veterans (Fentriss and Wickham 1992: 3-7). According to William, acknowledgement and recollection of their similar experiences and memories, frequently achieved by telling and listening to each other's stories, was grounding in a familial way:

I know one thing like I have my family? But the *NVMO* is really my family. Than my family is my family. Because the *NVMO* knows me. The *NVMO* knows pretty much everything about me. And I know the *NVMO* and they're more like my brothers and sisters than I would ever have with my regular family... It's because it knows the way I think...

William's comments suggest that, in addition to sharing memories (including sensory memory) and experiences in common, signification among veteran riding community

⁶⁶ I have previously referred to Jackson's concept of signification in Chapter 1.4.2, Existentiality in Place.

members was facilitated through particular “ideals of brotherhood” that were imported from everyday life in the Canadian Forces (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001: 146).

Michalowski and Dubisch suggest biker subculture was appealing to Vietnam veterans because it provided for them, “a world in which they” could “relive, even if in a pale form, the bonds of brotherhood and shared risk that they experienced” when they were in the Army:

The ideals of brotherhood includes giving other riders any assistance they might need in dealing with a disabled bike, giving money to those having financial problems getting to D.C. or back home, and most importantly, providing emotional and moral support for riders troubled by wartime memories, the pain of wartime losses, or fear of seeing the Wall (2001: 146).

In the NVMO, the ideals of brotherhood, and sisterhood, as was pointed out to me by both male and female veterans, were similar. They also included shared understanding of the rank structure and particular ways of being organized.

The opportunity to access and engage with experiences and memories (including affective ones) like their own, gathered in a mobile place by the road, was frequently described to me by veterans as their return to the military; a restoration of that sense of emplacement, though movement, that they enjoyed before retirement. Victor for example described the NVMO as an opportunity to “go back,” to “get back in and be able to spend some time with veterans.” Similarly, Glenn told me “when you get to the *NVMO*... you find it again... where you have that brotherhood again.” For William, the sense of return was further enhanced because upon meeting the veteran riding community for the first time he was reunited with several veterans he once served with:

At the first meeting I got invited into I saw... guys I served with! And I went oh my god, memory lane! And it was that twenty-year gap that I been missing, that I

been needing. Because I was strung up as a loner for a long time... now I'm part of this again. And I been happy with it.

Zoe too emphasized this shared sense of return (to military brothers and sisters). Her comments further illustrate its importance to the processes of signification:

It's like being back with all your guys. You know and they can discuss. What it was like when I did this and what it was like when I did that. Where he can't sit with people he works with and talk about what it was like to put up a tent in the middle of nowhere in a rain storm or what it was like to clean a rifle. I think it's just, it's like having your homeboys around, you know kind of thing. I think it helps him out that way. Because it's people that can relate. If he comes in, starts to talk—like one night he's upset and he just starts talking to someone about what he's going through. They can relate and they'll talk. Because the majority of them are PTSD...

Earlier, I addressed the re-emplacing qualities of helping others as part of my conversation about the freedom that membership in the riding community afforded veterans to participate in becoming new kinds of people (Lave and Wenger 1991). Legitimate peripheral participation in the veteran riding community also, importantly, included helping one another. Unlike the kind of helping I addressed in the last section—helping veterans in the larger community who were not members of the NVMO—here the phrase 'helping one another' signals supporting fellow veteran riding community members. I approach veterans' mutual acknowledgment and recollection of shared memories and experiences as another aspect of the process of signification in the NVMO. Ian and Amber offered some apt examples of support in this context:

Ian: Inside the *NVMO* at least we have guys that have been, they understand exactly what you're saying. Even if you told a story 85 times already. Because it's something that keeps coming back and haunting you. So what? So you say it 85, 86 times. 90 times, who cares? Right? And there's not, you're not being judged... I've had friends phone me at midnight saying uh—

Amber: I'm having a bad day.

Sharon Roseman has similarly linked storytelling with processes of emplacement and belonging (2012). Roseman emphasizes the interactional qualities of storytelling. “The recognition of the existence of the storytelling threads,” she argues, “helps us to see that stories should not be viewed as isolated events but rather that through storytelling, people are ‘collaboratively’ reflecting upon specific situations” (20012: 210). Roseman writes about storytelling in the context of Galicians in Spain who have been migrant workers in other countries, and argues that analysis of storytelling in such contexts is also helpful for understanding current and past patterns of movement (2012: 193). While some NVMO members certainly moved between countries whilst serving in the military, all of them have moved between military and post-military life. I believe that signification, or storytelling—including repeating the same story, as referred to by Ian—is a form of mutual acknowledgement of the legitimacy and validity of each other’s military experiences. It similarly created continuity between veterans’ military and post-military lives, and the creation of such continuity was emplacing. Below, Ian continues talking about the value he found in this aspect of membership in the NVMO:

And that’s why I’m part of the *NVMO*... It was because I found there was a need. Even for myself to be able to sit down and talk to somebody if I’m having a bad day. You know and I wanted to get something off my chest and you know you tell—you don’t go home and say, guess what? I’m having visions of dead bodies in front of me and it just doesn’t, it’s something you talk to somebody else about it. You talk to somebody that was there. And that’s sort of why the *NVMO* came to be...

Glenn’s comments further describe how signification in the form of mutual acknowledgement of the legitimacy and validity of each other’s military experiences operated in the veteran riding community:

You wanna talk? If you get a hold of us we'll listen. You know uh we're here to support one another inside the group and any other veteran. You know. And a lot of times that's just as simple as let's go for coffee. Yeah, I, I know you really want a beer or 20. But that's not what you need. You know and so the *NVMO* is a little bit different that way. We're kind of a, we support one another where it's needed. And sometimes we do, do the 20 beer...

Victor similarly referred to the *NVMO* as somewhere veterans can “vent their frustrations.” It was “a place... where you might not be able to solve the problem but at least you got people who empathize with you and understand that and listen to you when you talk about it.”

Many veteran riding community members were, to various degrees, wounded by their perception that Canada's government, media and civilian population had largely failed to reciprocate the sacrifices and contributions they made during their military service with adequate acknowledgement of them. In previous chapters I have linked this to veterans' secondary wounding experiences and other conditions of sense of dis-emplacement. Membership in the riding community gave veterans not only the opportunity to acknowledge and validate each other, but, as I will discuss in Chapter Eight, a platform to educate civilians about their military experiences as well, and potentially solicit civilian acknowledgement. I approach signification in the form of acknowledging the legitimacy and validity of each other's military experiences as another emplacing quality of the road. However, riding community members provided more practical forms of support as well.

As noted above by Glenn, the *NVMO* supported “one another where” it was “needed.” He and William cited practical forms of support beyond support in the form of mutual acknowledgement:

Glenn: We have some funds. If we find a veteran in need of assistance we'll raise funds. We'll pass a hat to help the guy out. You know... we can do and knock on his door and say, hey. You're having issues. You know. What do you need? You know if you need a new washing machine we'll buy you a washing machine. You know if you need somebody to talk to, we'll talk. You know what, we're probably gonna wind up suggesting you maybe wanna go see Veteran Affairs. Maybe you wanna get recommended to see the OSI⁶⁷ Clinic. And maybe you wanna talk to somebody there. Or maybe it's you know, we talk to VAC for ya and say you know what? This guy needs a wheelchair ramp, whatever the case you know? We do what we can. We don't always succeed. But we do what we can.

William: The *NVMO* will help you. We understand what you're going through, we will help your family. We will help your kids. We will help you get a job. We will help you with the house payment. We will help you with anything you need. Just contact us.

As indicated by Glenn, veteran riding community members who had previously dealt with Veterans Affairs Canada occasionally helped newcomers to navigate the claims process. In most contexts of this kind that I encountered, longer-time members, themselves managing operational stress injuries, supported or guided newer members through these kinds of practical challenges. Over time those newcomers themselves became old-timers who likewise provided practical guidance to a new 'generation' of veteran members.

I have approached signification in the *NVMO*, exemplified by the acknowledgement of the legitimacy and validity of each other's military experiences, support, and the shared sense of returning to family, as simultaneously a form of legitimate peripheral participation (Lave and Wenger 1991). As newcomers observed and participated in these kinds of interactions with other veterans, they practiced membership on their journey towards becoming old-timers and new kinds of people. They also

⁶⁷ Operational Stress Injury Clinic.

practiced measurable solutions to various challenges of dis-emplacement; including a sense of isolation resulting from the loss of their relationship with the military.

7.3 Witnessing Transformation

Cross-culturally, researchers have rooted the transformative power of mourning rites in their sociability (Counts and Counts 1991: 289; O'Connor 1991: 260). Mourning rituals offer the bereaved an opportunity to have their grief witnessed, moving both the bereaved and the society to which they belong towards the resolution of loss. Mourning rites, as the public expression of private grief, simultaneously help the bereaved assume new social roles in relation to their loss (Eisenbruch 1984: 291). New social roles resulting from the loss of a relationship to death include, for example, widow, orphan or "childless person" (Counts and Counts 1991: 291). By witnessing public expressions of grief, members of a society concede the bereaved person's new status as a result of their loss. Through the group's concession of their new status, the bereaved may be reincorporated into society in their new roles (van Gennep 1960). In this section I will discuss various ways in which the riding community offered veterans opportunities to have their grief over the loss of their relationships with the military witnessed, and the consequent transformation of newcomers; from soldiers who had lost the military into veterans reincorporated into the riding community. Reincorporation, in a brief review of more detailed discussion in Chapter Five, is the third state of van Gennep's tripartite rites of passage; it is preceded by separation and liminality (1960: 10, 11). According to van Gennep, cross-culturally, and throughout their lives, people pass between distinct social roles. These include, for example, un-married person to married, or, childless person to parent. Societies

frequently mark these transitions publicly with celebratory or ritual behaviour of some kind, “whose essential purpose is to enable the individual to pass from one defined position to another which is equally defined” (1960: 3).⁶⁸

During my conversation with William, he talked about how his sense of identification as a veteran riding community member relates to other periods of his life:

William: Well you have to be neutral. You just can't be one sided all the time. But there are military people that get very protective. No it's gotta be this or nothing. You can't have anything else. Well I feel that's not being 100 percent to yourself. To the group. Because you didn't start out that way. You transitioned in. Right? You weren't born in the military you became part of it. You weren't born into this you became part of it.

Karen: Almost a transitional space?

William: You know what? I would call the *NVMO* a very good... transitional space.

I have been arguing that becoming part of the riding community occurred for veterans over time and through legitimate peripheral participation in various kinds of community activities. However, one of the ways in which older-time members marked this social learning process for individual newcomers was at monthly meetings, in an event many referred to as ‘patching.’ Below, Victor compares being a newcomer in the *NVMO* to being a newcomer in (a hypothetical) outlaw motorcycle group and explains how the rules about patching changed while I was in the field:

Victor: With the *NVMO* it's almost, it's almost instantaneous. You're almost instantly accepted. You're there you know they make comments like you know you've got no probationary period because you've already served your probationary period. So you're part of the group immediately. And you're comfortable and it's—there's no, nothing that you need to prove. There's nothing

⁶⁸ See Chapter 5.1.1, Grief, unexpressed, for more details on rites of passage and the mitigation of the effects of disruptive change.

that you need to show them. You just, you're there and that's all that's, that's all that's needed.

Karen: Probationary period meaning the time between getting out [*of the military*] and getting back into the *NVMO*?

Victor: Well no. Just even getting into the *NVMO*. I mean you know now for example, and they've just changed it, is they're only patching once a year. So really you have a bit of a probationary period. Now if I join in, in October, I have to wait a whole year before I'm gonna get my *NVMO* patch. But um but when I got in uh I didn't, I got just on the tail end of how it used to be. And it was you know you've done your probation. There's no need to prove anything or serve some time or do anything. You're just, you're immediately accepted...

I was able to observe a few patching ceremonies, and participate in my own, before the changes indicated by Victor took place.

Patching ceremonies took place after *NVMO* administrative business was concluded at a monthly meeting. The President announced that he had crests for particular members who were then called up to have their crests bestowed upon them in front of the group. New members also had their photograph taken with the President and the Vice-President, holding the crest up for the camera. The photo was usually posted to the group's social media page. Along with their crest, new members received a patch with the name of the motorcycle unit. Together, crest and unit name patch indicated a newcomer's official incorporation (or re-incorporation, recalling the *NVMO* as a return to the military) into the riding community. New members were then expected to have their crest and unit name patch sewn onto their black leather vest, according to *NVMO* specifications. The crest was to be sewn onto the back of the vest and the unit name patch was to be sewn onto the right upper chest area of the vest. I was advised to have my crest and unit name patch sewn on at a local motorcycle apparel shop. The seamstress there

was partner to a member who rode with a neighbouring NVMO motorcycle unit. I purchased my vest from the same shop. My patching took place about four months after I applied for membership as a supporter.

In her comments below, Rachel conveys not only the transformative qualities of being presented with her crest, but the potentially emplacing qualities as well:

That's my new uniform now. That, those letters? Are my new uniform. That vest? It, that's my new, my new rank. All of me right there on the front there. That's me. That's who you see when I wear that vest.

The vest, to which Rachel refers to as her “new uniform,” was appropriately adorned with the NVMO crest, unit name patch, road name (which I will discuss later) and other relevant badges.⁶⁹ It reflected her restored “dignity,” she told me, and her pride in “what I have done in the military.” Patching—being awarded one’s crest—enabled the riding community to witness each veteran’s loss of their relationship to the military and recognize each newcomer’s new status as veteran riding community members. It is through these processes of witnessing and transition, I argue, that patching played a role in the resolution of veterans’ release bereavement.

While I believe that all the veterans I spoke with experienced release bereavement to some degree, all of them did not consider themselves to have sustained physical and/or psychological injuries while serving. Accordingly, to recognize particular kinds of

⁶⁹ Veterans and supporters affixed to their vests a wide variety of additional patches. Most riders, for example, wore their winged wheel, indicating that they had sufficiently demonstrated “a high standard of riding proficiency and etiquette” and had completed the allotted number of kilometers riding in formation with the unit (NVMO ride manual). Some riding community members also wore bars on their vests indicating each year of membership. Beyond winged wheel and bar, members customized their vests with numerous other patches and badges of their choosing.

experiences, unit leadership occasionally set time aside at monthly meetings for the presentation of quilts of valour. Quilts of Valour Canada Society (QOV) is a federal not-for-profit corporation. The charity was founded in 2006 in Edmonton, Alberta. According to their website, the charity's mission is "to ensure that injured Canadian Forces members are recognized for their service and commitment to our country"

(www.quiltsofvalour.ca). Quilts of Valour gives "this support through the presentation of quilts to comfort our past and present Canadian Forces members"

(www.quiltsofvalour.ca). I attended one monthly meeting during which the President arranged for the presentation of five quilts of valour to veteran members who were managing physical and psychological injuries sustained during their military service. The President called their names one at a time, and each of them stood before the group and was presented with a quilt of valour by a civilian member of the charity. The quilts were made "by individuals, social groups or quilting bees" according to specific standards issued by the charity; including, a stitched on official label indicating the quilt's identification number, the date of its presentation, and the name of the quilt's recipient and quilter(s) (www.quiltsofvalour.ca). Photos of quilt presentations were taken and posted to the riding community's social media website.

Zoe talked to me a little bit about her partner's reaction to receiving his quilt:

The *NVMO* gave him—well he got that blanket. Those quilts in, that was in April or—yeah it was in April... And uh like [*names a NVMO veteran member*] says, we know that he, he's struggling. Like he needed something to boost his morale kinda you know and... yeah. It was like a morale booster. And that's what I said to [*names her veteran partner*]. Like because he phones me that night and he's like, I got this cool blanket! And he's just like going [*makes excited fast talking noise*] and I'm like, that's cool! And he sent me pictures and I'm like, that is like the nicest blanket ever you know like and it is. Like just the work that goes into

them is just amazing... I looked at a bunch of them like on Sunday? ... That was the first place he took his mum. Come look at these quilts like—and then through the book and he was like, this is the one I have mom...

Zoe is referring to a Show ‘n Shine event that the riding community had organized for the weekend prior to our conversation; which both of us had attended. QOV had a booth set up at which visitors could peruse a book of photos of the numerous quilts the charity had presented to veterans across Canada. Zoe’s account of her partner’s enthusiasm about receiving his quilt exemplifies how powerful civilian acknowledgement of their military experiences could be for some veteran riding community members. While not alone a universal remedy for operational stress injuries or the harmful effects of cumulative secondary wounding experiences, quilts of valour do seem to illustrate the potentially powerful emplacing capacity of the opportunities for acknowledgement gathered by the road.

The third way in which members marked the processes of transition and (re)incorporation (or re-emplacement) in the riding community is through the bestowing by older-timers of road names upon newcomers. Various social scientists have addressed numerous kinds of social work that surnames, first names and nicknames do in societies around the world (Glazer 1987; Holland 1990; vom Bruck and Bodenhorn 2006; Finch 2008; Jackson 2008). Gabrielle vom Bruck and Barbara Bodenhorn’s edited volume, for example, explores the potential impact of the processes of naming on “anthropological understanding of personhood” (2006: 4), the roles names play in bridging social boundaries or widening social distance, and, naming in the context of power; including the harmful and potentially violent capacities of bestowing or detaching from names (2006). More relevant to the use and bestowal of road names in the *NVMO* however, is

Janet Finch's discussion of "how people manage the process of naming in a way which connects with family relationships" (2008: 720).

Finch writes about how people use surnames and forenames to "map" and "display" family in the contemporary United Kingdom (2008: 714, 715). Surnames in the UK, she argues, enable people who are related to one another to track their connection into the past and plot it into the future by passing (usually but not always⁷⁰) a patronymic surname to succeeding generations (2008: 715). Surnames also render family connections over time visible to other people. Forenames, according to Finch, lend this first name-surname naming formula some individuality (2008: 718). She cites "political and religious dimensions" of a particular population, fashion, and the desire to honour meaningful relationships with particular people among factors that influence parents' choice of names for their children⁷¹ (2008: 718-720). Regardless of the influence however, Finch argues that the "selection of forenames makes a family connection in that the selection is a distinctive task of parents" (2008: 721).

In the NVMO, selection of a road name for newcomers was the distinctive task of older-timers. My intention here is not to suggest that older-timers were like parents to newcomers. It is instead to approach the bestowal and use of road names in the NVMO as having similarly displayed members' sense of relatedness to each other. Rather than as

⁷⁰ Finch notes that "while Anglo-Saxon convention is for a surname" to be patronymic, it is not obligatory under the law. It is equally legitimate for children take the surnames of their mothers (2008: 712).

⁷¹ By meaningful relationships, Finch is referring to specific "family" connections that are special to the parents. Parents consequently name their children to honour and publically display how much they value such relationships (2008: 721).

parents, veterans often expressed their sense of relation to each other using the familial terms ‘brother’ and ‘sister.’ Consequently, I too approach veteran riding community members as related to each other. A very brief discussion of the anthropological concept of relatedness can help articulate this sense of connection in relation to the processes of road naming.

Since the mid 1970s, various studies of kinship have addressed numerous relational processes, all alternative to biological procreation, through which relatedness may be enabled between people (Carsten 2000). Anthropologists cite eating, living and sleeping together, sharing certain body substances, and working together as processes capable of transforming people into ‘kin’ (Irwin: July 2007, personal communication; Carsten 1995; Carsten 2000; Hutchinson 2000; Lambert 2000; Edwards and Strathern 2000; Bodenhorn 2000). Canadian infantry soldiers eat, live and work together. In combat contexts, Canadian infantry soldiers may literally and figuratively bleed together as a result of injuries, casualties and realities of operations that require them to fight and sometimes kill together. Following kinship studies cited above, shared military experiences including intense tours of duty and training courses may render soldiers related to each other. I believe this sense of relatedness, instilled in recruits and sometimes further solidified on deployment in dangerous theatres of operation, was subsequently imported into the NVMO; a place which, as I have noted above, has been perceived by various veterans as a kind of return to, if not almost a continuation of, their military lifeworlds.

Returning again to Finch, road names in the NVMO deployed aspects of both

surnames and forenames. Like surnames, some road names mapped continuity with veterans' past as Canadian Forces members. Road names like these referred to particular jobs veterans had performed whilst serving in the military, or, to other aspects of their military lifeworlds. However, like forenames, such road names simultaneously individuated as well. Other road names referred to particular roles that members played in the NVMO, similarly lending the kind of individuality that Finch assigns to forenames. Almost without exception, veterans' road names expressed their connections to each other through their participation in the riding community activities and as ex-military brothers and sisters. The practice of road naming in the NVMO then may also be approached as intention—to replace post-release sense of isolation with sense of emplacement. I approach intention in this context from Jackson's perspective:

This then, is my answer to the question. What's in a name? Language is perhaps the most 'natural' form of intentionality, and naming the most rudimentary expression of our need to act in and on the world, at least to the same extent that it acts upon us, so we live, not passively and blindly, in the face of events we neither comprehend nor control, but actively and intentionally, as if we had a hand in shaping those events, and deciding their meaning (2008: 89).

Alternatively, road names may be approached as nicknames. Bodenhorn describes nicknames as “a class of names added onto formal personal names by people who would not usually participate in formal naming ceremonies” (2006: 143). According to Theodore Holland, nicknames are frequently informed by an individual's physical attributes or behaviour (1990: 260). They may also be used between friends and romantic partners to express voluntary ties, to mask individuals' identities, to delineate group boundaries, and are frequently implicated in both forms of social control and the generation of social solidarity (Glazer 1987; Holland 1990; Bodenhorn 2006). Nicknames may also refer to a

particular experience in an individual's life (Glazer 1987: 78). Writing about Jewish immigrants in the USA, Jack Glazer has argued that nicknames have the "capacity to call up nostalgic images," memories and emotions regarding communities that have changed or dispersed over time. Nicknames, according to Holland, also offer insight into particular social relationships and the social norms of a society (1990: 259, 261).

Many of these descriptions of nicknames may also be applied to road names in the NVMO. I assign the kind of road names that older-time veteran riding community members bestowed upon newer veteran members to five general categories. These include road names related to: jobs in the military or roles in the NVMO, physical attributes, personality and/or behaviour, heritage, and surnames. While I choose not to use any riding community members' actual road names in the interest of maintaining some degree of anonymity, I can use imaginary road names to typify these categories.

For example, if a new veteran member worked for the Communications and Electronics Branch of the Canadian Forces (also known as Signals) while they were in the Army, they might be bestowed with the road name 'Mercury' because of the trade badge they once wore on their uniform, which depicts the Greek God and two lightening bolts. Road names that related to veterans' military jobs or trades expressed continuity with their military lifeworlds and make up the largest category of road names that I documented in my field journals. Alternatively, if a new veteran member was serving as Secretary with the NVMO unit, they might be named 'Minutes' because that role involves, for example, recording monthly meeting minutes and distributing other important documents.

As an example of a road name in the category of physical attributes, a new member with unruly white hair might be named ‘Doc,’ after the character in the film ‘Back to the Future’ who wore his hair similarly. Many NVMO members were familiar with musicians, films and other popular culture of the 1970s and 1980s. A member who consistently displayed strong organizational and teamwork skills in contexts of riding or remembrance events might acquire the road name ‘Ant,’ after the insects that display similar qualities. These are qualities that NVMO veterans valued. Similarly, some veteran members were bestowed with animal road names. Other NVMO veterans were given road names that played on their actual surnames. A member whose surname was Swift, for example, might acquire the road name ‘Swift.’ Finally, a member with Russian heritage whose first name is, for example, Alexei, might be bestowed with the road name ‘Czar.’

Generally speaking, road names in the NVMO were more descriptive than humorous, mocking or ironic. Additionally, I cannot suggest any significant differences between the kind of road names given to veterans who were men and those given to veterans who were women. It is worth reiterating, however, that at the time of my fieldwork there were only two veteran participants who were women in the NVMO. It seems possible that more gendered patterns could have emerged in road names had more women veterans been available for comparison. Many (but not all) road names across all five categories, with varying degrees of subtlety, seem to convey qualities that veteran riding communities deem valuable. Such qualities include, for example, organization, teamwork, efficiency, cleverness, attention to detail, leadership, and strength. What seems more important to the context of re-emplacement, however, is the social work of re-

incorporation performed through the bequeathing, use, and wearing of road names in the NVMO.

Bodenhorn, Glazer and Holland approach nicknames as generally used and bestowed among peers. Glazer in particular notes, that among his informants, nicknames operated to distinguish individuals from their kin (1987: 78, 83). Riding community veterans were not biologically related to each other. Nevertheless, as I have noted earlier, alternative processes of relatedness that were imported from their military lifeworlds created among them a sense of being family to each other. From this perspective of relatedness, older-time members named newcomer members as (fictive) kin. Old-timer veterans did not bestow road names upon newcomer veterans in a formal ceremony per se (Bodenhorn 2006: 143); however in perhaps a semi-formal fashion, upon receiving their crest, proper protocol for new members was to have their road names embroidered onto a badge and affixed to their vest. Therefore, from this perspective on relatedness, I prefer to think about NVMO road names as more a first name/surname mash up than as nicknames. The term nicknames, however, seems to fit supporter road names quite well.

Unlike some veteran road names, the supporter road names that I encountered displayed no continuity with the military. Mostly, like nicknames, supporter road names related to aspects of individual supporters' personalities, their jobs inside or outside the NVMO or their connections to veteran members, usually their spouses. My own road name for example, 'Dots,' related to the job I was usually assigned at the Field of Crosses: spray-painting thousands of brightly coloured dots onto a grass field, to mark where holes were to be drilled prior to the installation of the crosses. Regardless, older-

time riding community members also chose new-coming supporters' road names and those names displayed supporters' NVMO connections (although not necessarily family connections). While I conceive of veterans' road names as marking a kind of *re-*incorporation into the group—many veterans perceived the riding community as a way to return to the military, I conceive of supporter road names as a way of marking supporters' incorporation (for the first time) into the community.

Riding community members affixed their road names, once having been bestowed with them, onto their vests. Road name patches went on the right upper chest area of the vest. Executive officers also wore patches indicating their rank (i.e.: President, Vice-President, Road Captain, Sgt. at Arms) in the same area. The processes of road naming (bestowing, receiving and saying road names), like motorcycle riding, participation in various fundraising activities, and various forms of signification, provide another example of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice. The processes of road naming also marked newcomers' new status as another kind of person—a member of the riding community.

7.4 Bridging the understanding gap

This chapter has focused on the learning/participation processes through which newcomers in the NVMO became part of a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991: 29). In addition to the freedom nexus, the de-isolation of loss, and the witnessing of transformation, I turn now to the final example: bridging the civilian-veteran understanding gap. My conception of the NVMO as a potential bridging mechanism emerged through conversation with supporter and veteran members. Specifically, it

emerged through their responses to my question: what value do civilians bring to the NVMO?

When one of the earliest members of the NVMO addressed his membership at the annual general meeting that I attended, I learned that the inclusion of civilian supporters in the organization reflected his personal experiences of post-release transition. As a veteran with physical and psychological injuries sustained on deployment to the Balkans in the 1990s, he attributed his survival of that period in his life to support from a civilian and a veteran motorcycle rider (from a prior riding group with which he was involved). Paraphrasing his words at the meeting, this member told members from formations across Canada that the NVMO was ‘for veterans who come back from war and are looking for a mission and a family’ (field journal notes for August 3, 2013). Based on my conversations with members (and as I have discussed above), I interpret ‘the mission’ to be helping veterans and their families in Calgary’s larger community by participating in various fundraising activities. I interpret ‘family’ to mean the sense of brotherhood that veterans have described sharing with other veteran riding community members.

This individual, one of the organization’s first members, imagined the NVMO as a veteran riding community that would also welcome civilians because in his own experience a civilian was ‘key’ to helping him ‘fit’ back into civilian society (field journal notes for August 3, 2013). When I continued to interview riding community members following the annual general meeting, I asked what they thought about the founder’s perspective on the role that supporters were meant to play in the NVMO; most responded by describing their own experiences. Based on these conversations, excerpts of which I

cite in this section, I suggest that civilian supporters brought value to the NVMO by dismantling, even if to small degrees, some veterans' assumptions about the inevitability of social dys-appearance in their interactions with civilians (Leder 1990: 96). Supporters, according to my conversations, also offered a fresh perspective.

As I discussed in Chapter Five, and following Leder, just as physical pain can cause the body to dys-appear, experiencing the objectifying gaze of another is capable of pulling the body into a mode of social dys-appearance (1990: 96). Leder argues that when people communicate with each other successfully, share an experience, and all parties participate in an interaction as co-subjects, they "transcend together to another common landscape," allowing their "moods and thoughts to mingle" (1990: 95). People are not self-conscious whilst enjoying each other's company in such conditions of "communicative sociality" (1990: 94). In contexts of social dys-appearance however, one or more parties deny the possibility of co-transcendence. Consequently, one participant in the encounter (or more) becomes self-conscious, experiencing the encounter as the object of others' scrutiny, rather than as co-subjects (1990: 96).

In order to bring the notion of place into my discussion of social dys-appearance, I have cited Jackson's description of the experiences of Aboriginal people in places characterized by white Australian ways of doing things.⁷² Following Jackson and Leder, I argued, in Chapter Five, that when some veterans inhabited civilian arenas of engagement, places where their skills and habits were not the dominant way of doing things, many of them experienced a sense of dis-emplacement. The persistence of military

⁷² See Chapter 5.3, Bodies out of Place, for more discussion of these connections.

skills and habits drew objectifying, distancing gazes from civilians, which in turn caused experiences of self-consciousness in veterans and helped generate their assumptions of the impossibility of communicative sociality in civilian arenas of engagement. I argue here that when civilian supporters were invited to inhabit the road, an arena of engagement where veteran ways of doing things were dominant, the riding community facilitated co-transcendence between veterans and supporters. It did so by gathering opportunities for communicative sociality; specifically, the riding community provided a mobile space for both veterans and civilians to inhabit, by doing things together.

In his comments below, Jack describes motorcycling as a site of interaction, capable of bridging social distance between veterans and civilians, and over time, potentially capable of narrowing the veteran-civilian understanding gap:

Actually being with somebody that you know has a shared interest, being the bikes... so there's something we can talk about while we get to know each other a little bit. So it gives you at least a point of contact. And then you can go from there... Because generally speaking, meeting somebody on the street that's a civilian and you're military, you really don't have that shared common interest and that's where they're lacking with the transition period. Because they don't have the shared common interest. And motorcycles are one that you can use.

According to Jack, veteran riders and supporter riders could talk about motorcycles, motorcycling, and could ride together right away. As a result of these encounters and over time, according to his experience, some veterans became comfortable enough to share military experiences with particular supporter riders.

Jack's description of the NVMO as "a point of contact" in some ways recalls Mary Louise Pratt's ideas about the necessity of "safe houses" in the context of contact zones, such as those that emerge in colonial relationships (1991: 40). "Where there are

legacies of subordination,” she argues, “groups need places for healing and mutual recognition, safe houses in which to construct shared understandings, knowledges, claims on the world that they can use then bring into the contact zone” (1991: 40). I am not attempting to portray riding community veterans’ as subjugated by civilian Canadians, nor would it be accurate (in most cases) to portray their relationship as colonial or consisting of “highly asymmetrical relations of power” (1991: 34). However, riding community members certainly expressed their sense of being misunderstood by civilians outside the NVMO as something they grappled with. Moreover, based on Jack’s comments, he conceived of the NVMO as providing space in which veterans and civilian supporters could begin to understand one another better; and bring that understanding into spaces outside the NVMO in which veterans encountered civilians.

One potential consequence of these kinds of interactions between veterans and civilian supporters in the NVMO, Jack told me, was that they provided veterans with face-to-face, inter-subjective encounters with empathetic civilians.

I think it’s, from my perspective I think it’s more that a lot of these guys, especially the ones that served in the 80s, late 80s early 90s, when the military was really being kind of kicked aside and you know not really recognized they felt that most civilians didn’t want them around, didn’t appreciate what they had done. And I think that with being around civilians that are part of their unit, they now know that there are civilians out there that actually do support what they did. Who do appreciate what they did. Whereas that was never apparent to them before... Especially with certain units more than others but I mean, depending on how many civilians there are in the organization, supporters in the organization, they can sometimes get a better feel for the fact that there really are people out there that are on their side. And it helps them to be a little bit more trusting of the general public.

Jack saw the veteran riding community as a potential incubator for burgeoning trust, very much in its infancy, between veterans and particular civilians who were also members of

the riding community. When I asked Colin for his opinion on what supporters brought to the riding community we also discussed trust.

Colin: Yeah, I think supporters can play a positive role... He's uh bringing a positive experience.

Karen: Of civilians?

Colin: He's a supporter, yeah of civilians. He's uh, if he's sticking with his person that he came in with and he can relate to the rest of us. He's a good supporter, he's supporting us.

Colin told me that he had mostly had positive experiences with the supporters in the riding community. I asked him whether his interactions with civilians who he deemed more or less trustworthy informed his experiences beyond the riding community:

Karen: You've got civilian members and veteran members and um veterans experiencing, having positive experiences with civilians.

Colin: Mm-hmm

Karen: ... Kind of go through there and you come out the other end

Colin: Yes

Karen: And it's a little bit easier to be in civilian society

Colin: Mm-hmm

Karen: So... trusting civilians is that something that has been—

Colin: Yes. Oh yeah. Big time. I found out the hard way and it really hurt me. A couple of times. More than once. And uh now I am more cautious when it comes to civilians. Yeah. I will only do so much for them until they earn my trust. It's on different levels that I'll trust them.

Karen: ... The *NVMO* has helped with that?

Colin: Yes. Oh yeah. Yeah.

It is important to emphasize here that Colin maintained a healthy degree of assumption of the impossibility of communicative sociability with civilians, especially those he encountered outside contexts of the riding community. Indeed, neither Jack nor Colin perceived the NVMO as the solution to narrowing the civilian-veteran understanding gap, or, to the restoration of all veterans' trust in civilian Canada. Nevertheless, both seemed to agree that the opportunity presented by the riding community to engage in positive encounters with trustworthy civilians helped rather than hindered veterans' capacity to conceive of supportive civilians outside the context of the riding community. Such encounters, Colin told me, were "good therapy."

According to Jack, supporters in the riding community included spouses who were married to veterans throughout their military careers, and, spouses and friends who met veterans following their retirement from the military. In his comments below, Jack talked to me a little bit about the difference and how he thought it related to the civilian-veteran understanding gap:

First of all, I think we bring a civilian perspective. So that they actually can see what the other side thinks. Which, sometimes they don't get that in general speaking. I mean, when they go home to their wives or their husbands or whatever that is not a military veteran but they've been part of that military life their entire time. So they know exactly what these guys expect. They know what they like and at the end of the day it's still military. Whereas with us we come in and we don't have that military background. We don't have that military experience we've never been on a military base... Or not lived on one. So I haven't had that kind of experience. So they can see the perspective we get from the other side. And I think that helps with the transition for them.

According to Quinn, both kinds of supporters could potentially play a bridging role in the riding community:

Quinn: Supporter brings to the *NVMO*. Well a lot of... a lot of good benefits

because that gave the opportunity for you to work closely with your spouse. Or some people that do understand what being a veteran is or what an active military person is... or somebody who's served... Having the supporters with you is—just gives you like... support. Exactly what it is. They understand you, you know. They believe in what you've done and where you're heading for.

Karen: You've got... civilians and military kind of in the same place. Folks who are just getting out and transitioning into the civilian side... Or struggling to do that—

Quinn: That's right. It helps you to adjust because then you have a chance to talk to a supporter that's been involved with the military people. A new person getting out of the military then they meet the supporters, it doesn't come across so bad as if—then if you were just to meet the civvy who has nothin' to do with the military. It's kind of an in between.

Quinn's perspective of the road in this context as “a kind of in between” calls up, for me, a Venn diagram. The two overlapping spheres represent civilian and military arenas of engagement. The intersection, where military and civilian arenas of engagement overlap, represents the riding community.

Like Quinn, Warren too appreciated having his spouse's participation in the riding community as a supporter. Regarding his wife, Warren told me, “I love the fact that she's involved.” Both veterans described sharing riding community experiences with their spouses as a positive aspect of including supporters in the veteran riding community. As Amber explained to me however, supporters' inclusion in the veteran riding community often benefitted spouses as well; specifically, spouses who had been involved with a veteran member during their military career.

Amber: Well and I think too, like groups like the *NVMO* I mean there's a lot of benefit because there's support there for families too, right? Um you know if you can imagine [*a family's*] experience too is quite different as a spouse and... kids for example who you know, they know dad has PTSD, they know a lot of different things but trying to understand or cope with the scope of his experience? Or how he has to cope every day or any of that kind of thing is a much different thing...

Karen: Groups are perhaps creating a safe environment for that kind of education?

Amber: Yeah well I think like the *NVMO* is quite good about doing a lot of education. Like they put out a lot of information about what's available in terms of support, counselling support like for veteran and family members. Um you know and I think that kind of thing really helps. Because it helps to normalize it too. Like it helps you to see well, okay I'm not the only one. And uh there's other families that are out there that are dealing with this and that kind of thing. So it helps to make it easier to deal with. And to sort of overcome that bit of feeling of stigma and start working towards something that, you know, is healthier... Because like these guys are, like they tend to see PTSD I think, I find it tends to isolate the individual who is suffering from it. Um and I think it helps to pull them into a group and sort or reduce that isolation. But they also get isolated from their families, right? So this helps I think to sort of help them sort of reunite with their families. And create more functional families again you know?

The inclusion of supporters in the veteran riding community, for Amber, had the potential to play a role in both the de-isolation of families struggling with a veteran's psychological injuries, and, the de-isolation of the veteran from their own spouses and/or children.

Drawing on Lave and Wenger, I have identified four processes of legitimate peripheral participation through which retired Canadian Forces members, newcomers to the *NVMO*, became new kinds of people: veteran riding community members. These processes of learning/participation have included the freedom nexus, the de-isolation of loss, witnessing transformation, and bridging the civilian-veteran understanding gap. It has also been my argument that participation in these processes of legitimate peripheral participation in the *NVMO*, which I have approached as a community of mobility practice, was re-emplacing for veteran members. I have examined how members' participation in these processes was re-emplacing by demonstrating how participation is simultaneously a response to and resolution of the conditions of dis-emplacement: release bereavement, the dys-appearance of military skills and habits, and secondary wounding. I

have focused in this chapter on the emplacing qualities of relationships inside the riding community, specifically, the relationships between veterans and other veterans, and, between veterans and supporters. I turn now to veteran riding community members' relationships with civilians outside the riding community, and the emplacing qualities of the social processes of remembrance.

Chapter Eight: The Politics of Remembrance

Along their journey towards old-timer status in the community of mobilized practice, newcomers to the NVMO participated in emplacing social processes that operated within the veteran riding community. I have referred to these (re) emplacing processes of learning/participation that took place within the NVMO as the freedom nexus, the de-isolation of loss, the witnessing of transformation, and the narrowing of a (civilian) supporter-veteran understanding gap. In this chapter, my discussion focuses on processes of legitimate peripheral participation/learning that operated where veteran riding community members and civilians beyond the community of mobilized practice encountered one another. I refer to these processes of legitimate peripheral participation/learning as the politics of remembrance. Using two contexts of civilian-veteran encounters—at the Field of Crosses and during school visits—I examine how riding community veterans, with the assistance of their supporter members, practiced the politics of remembrance.

The practice of remembrance in this chapter refers mostly to riding community members' participation in events and activities that took place in Calgary in the weeks leading up to Remembrance Day (November 11) in 2013 and 2014. These activities and events revolved primarily around the commemoration of Southern Albertan Canadian Forces members who have died in military service to Canada, and, ways in which NVMO veterans inserted themselves into public conversation about remembrance in Calgary. I approach veterans' participation in remembrance activities as strategic. While riding community members certainly sought to commemorate fallen Canadian Forces members

and raise money for struggling veterans, they also used remembrance activities as a platform—from which to complicate how local civilians thought and talked about Canadian Forces veterans and peacekeeping. It is therefore my argument that riding community veterans practiced the politics of remembrance, in part, to produce change.

NVMO members described some encounters with civilians over the years as dissatisfying in at least two ways: civilians more often than not perceived of Canadian veterans as elderly men who fought in World War II, and, civilians understood too little about the realities of Canadian soldiering during the last three decades of the twentieth century, the 1990s in particular. In this chapter I discuss various ways in which veteran riding community members deployed remembrance to disabuse civilians of what NVMO veterans considered to be inaccurate perceptions of them and the work they did as Canadian Forces members. “We’re not,” one veteran member told me, “just old guys with canes.” According to another, “the civvies... care about us... They care about the guys that are serving”; but “they don’t get us.” In this chapter I consider why changing civilians’ perceptions of them was a meaningful endeavour for veteran riding community members to participate in together.

Effectively changing the ways in which civilians thought and talked about them and their work, veterans told me, involved raising awareness of their relative youth compared to veterans of World War II (or even the Korean War), and, raising civilian awareness of veteran riding members’ experiences and contributions to United Nations peacekeeping operations. Also important to the practice of remembrance, based on my observations and conversations, was soliciting civilian acknowledgment of veteran riding

community members' continuity with Canada's war dead. Like the more inward facing processes of legitimate peripheral participation that were the focus of Chapter Seven, I believe that veterans experienced the outward-facing processes of remembrance—processes that operated where riding community veterans and civilians outside the NVMO encountered one another—as emplacing. Practicing remembrance, I argue, helped some veterans' mitigate the challenges of release bereavement and secondary wounding. Before I analyze veteran riding community members' participation in the Field of Crosses and school visits as a politics of remembrance however, some discussion of the memorialization of war and its development over time in Europe and North America is appropriate.

8.1 War Memorialization traditions in Europe and North America

Kristin Ann Haas traces the earliest war memorials to the ancient societies of Egypt, Greece and Rome (1998: 40-42). These monuments, she argues, were “dramatic homages to the victories of gods and kings” (1998: 40). The imposing obelisks built by ancient Egyptians, for example, were designed to commemorate those deities believed to have conferred upon their leaders victory in war. Similarly, reliefs carved by the ancient Greeks mythically depicted their war heroes in battle. Ancient Romans, according to Haas, practiced the tradition of stealing their enemies' memorials and bringing them back to Rome; which is how obelisks eventually became facets of western European and North American architectural design (1998: 41-42). The Romans also built columns and arches to commemorate the military victories of their leaders, further elements of design that would diffuse across Western Europe and North America. Most relevant for Haas

regarding each of these memorial traditions however, is their attention “to the power of divine forces and glorious leaders”; and their simultaneous erasure of the dead bodies of common soldiers (1998: 40).

According to Hass, until the early 1860s, soldiers in Europe and North America were buried in “hastily dug, shallow mass graves.” (1998: 41). She identifies ancient Greece as the only exception. Hass argues that ancient Greece lends insight into how governing bodies in Europe and North America came to see value in the commemoration of particular soldiers. In addition to reliefs that mythically depicted the battles of distinguished heroes, the Greeks commonly inscribed the names of their war dead on “memorial stelae”⁷³ (1998: 42). These were essentially casualty lists carved into stone, a memorial tradition that would much later emerge in Europe and Canada following the First World War (1998: 42).

Hass links the Greek exception to the erasure of common soldiers in war memorialization to the social status of non-elite soldiers in ancient Greece (1998: 43). Unlike the common soldiers who made up the military forces of Egypt and Rome, the Greek war dead were largely comprised of citizen-soldiers:

Because this attention to individual soldiers runs counter to the long history of bold memorials to victorious leaders, it is worth speculating about why Greeks built such a different kind of memory and about why the rest of Europe ignored these traditions until the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Certainly, the social position of those who fought is at the heart of this question. A soldier who is a citizen rather than a hired mercenary requires a different kind of memory (1998: 43).

⁷³ The first of these casualties lists dates to about the fifth century B.C., according to Haas (1998: 42).

New ideas surrounding the practices of memorialization began to make a similar shift in Europe when citizen-soldier armies emerged in the eighteenth century, around the time of the French and American revolutions (Haas 1998: 43, citing George Mosse 1975).

These new ideas surrounding the practice of memorialization were informed by citizen-soldiers' emerging sense of identification with a nation, and, nations' exigency to secure civilian-soldiers' willingness to volunteer as soldiers (1998: 43). Hass, again following Mosse, explains:

The army volunteers were powerful mythmakers who introduced sacrifice and sacred heroism as the central tropes of memorialization... In nationalism, people found individual identities through war, giving individual men a sense of power and presence in the community. This vision of an empowering nation was predicated on the willingness of the eighteenth-century volunteers to fight and on their practice of seeing themselves as martyrs to a cause larger than themselves—the infant nation (1998: 43).

Hass cites the battle of Gettysburg, which took place about a century later during the American Civil War, as an exemplary site from which to regard how these new ideas surrounding identification with the nation, volunteerism, and commemoration of the war dead effected a dramatic shift in Euro-North-American war memorialization traditions; from monuments commemorating battles and leaders, to the marking of individual soldiers' graves (1998: 43).

In 1863, Pennsylvania governor Andrew G. Curtin visited the wounded at Gettysburg and subsequently tasked a Northern lawyer, David Wills, with attending to the many dead and dying soldiers in surrounding hospitals. Hass notes that consequently, in a letter to the governor, Wills requested that a common burial ground be granted, demonstrating a sense of responsibility to honour Union soldiers' loss of life (1998: 45).

Wills' sense of responsibility for the individuals who died stretched "beyond a public health function," argues Hass, exemplifying a significant shift away from conventional practice; the burying of dead soldiers in mass graves. In his letter Wills further showed concern for both the families of fallen Union soldiers and for living soldiers (1998: 46). According to Hass, the burial ground Wills proposed in his letter would both assure the families of Union soldiers' that their sons' "sacrifice" was important by "caring for their kindred 'properly,'" and, assure living soldiers of "posthumous respect in exchange for their lives"⁷⁴ (1998: 46).

Also in 1863, Pennsylvania lawyer David McConaughy proposed to turn the battlefield itself into a war memorial in the form of an "historic landmark" (1998: 47). Hass notes that the language of this proposal to the governor and the citizens of Pennsylvania was replete with what she calls a new patriotism, which extolled the heroic sacrifices and contributions made by the Union war dead for the sake of the nation (1998: 48). The governor would accommodate both proposals, to memorialize the individual bodies of the dead, and, mandate the landscape on which they died in service to the Union (1998: 49). According to Hass, the letters surrounding both proposals—for a military cemetery and a battlefield memorial at Gettysburg—demonstrate the infancy of memorial practices that would inform American processes of national identification and commemoration for the next century, linking volunteerism, sacrifice, and the bodies of the dead in "patriotic memory" (1998: 49).

⁷⁴ Hass assigns political design for Mill's proposed cemetery as well. He hoped the cemetery would help convince voters to re-elect the governor and improve the Union Army's low state of morale (1998: 46).

The state militias that made up the American military during the American Civil War were made up primarily of volunteers and conscripts (Hass 1998: 50). However, the federal Conscription Act of 1863, implemented in response to high desertion rates and strong opposition to state attempts to conscript, also made it legal for men to buy deferments or pay others to fight in their place. Consequently, about half the militias were made up of the poor, including new immigrants⁷⁵ (1998: 50). According to Hass, the other half of the militias, those who volunteered and did not evade the draft:

Represented a real citizen fighting force: they were fighting for something other than money. The Civil War volunteers and draftees played a crucial role in transforming the memory of the soldier... Their mission was, at least in part, ideological, and they had families waiting for them at home. In spending these lives, the federal government was exacting a high price from its citizenry in exchange for which the nation would have to value the memory of the dead (1998: 50).

About five decades later another shift in focus, from commemoration of important battles and glorious leaders to commemoration of the soldiers who died fighting, would occur in Western Europe and Canada (Hass 1998: 53-54; Thomsen 1995: 6).

Following World War I, war memorialization projects similarly linked military service and nationalism to the commemoration (and perhaps sacralisation) of dead soldiers. The sheer scale of the loss of life demanded a further shift in the practice of war memorialization, however—towards the commemoration of an idea (1998: 55-58). While the practice of proper burial for dead soldiers was mobilized by American politicians to articulate a kind of contract between the individual soldier and the nation during the

⁷⁵ According to Hass, many of these conscripted were dissatisfied with the terms of the draft. In New York in the summer of 1863, for example, draft riots resulted in about one hundred deaths (1998: 50)

American Civil War, the deaths of nearly 8 million people representing various countries could not as neatly be justified as honourable sacrifice for the sake of one's nation (1998: 54). Instead, memorial commissions in Europe "spoke of remembering the tragedy of this war as a warning against future wars" (1998: 55). Although some small villages and city centres in Europe continued to install traditional war monuments including obelisks, arches, bronze statues, and columns, these new and cautionary warnings were communicated with the names of the dead carved onto pre-existing architecture (1998: 55). The new memorial practice became complicated, however. In the process of commemorating the individual deaths, notes Haas, those same individuals became lost in the sheer number of listed names. Haas refers to this as a process of massification—in which individual soldiers were, in a sense, commemorated into non-existence (1998: 55).

Haas also identifies the Euro-North American practice of remembering the Unknown Soldier, which emerged in the United Kingdom in 1920, as an example of the abstracting process of massification (1998: 56). Rather than individual soldiers becoming lost in a sea of names, the Unknown Soldier was an anonymous body representing a sea of bodies (1998: 57). Both practices, argues Haas, were efforts to respond to the large scale of loss of life resulting from the war. The practice of commemorating the Unknown Soldier involved the selection of a soldier who died in World War I, dis-interring them, and then re-interring them in a specific tomb referred to as a tomb of the Unknown Soldier (1998: 57). The soldier would remain forever anonymous. Informed by this practice in Europe, the USA and eventually Canada commissioned Unknown Soldier memorial projects as well (Haas 1998:57; 2000: www.cbc.news). A few years earlier, in

1917, the British Empire and its Dominions had established the Imperial War Graves Commission to build and look after cemeteries in which all the Imperial war dead would reside⁷⁶ (Thomson 1995: 7).

As did the practice of war memorialization in Europe and the USA following World War I, Canada's war memorialization practices similarly shifted from the glorification of war and its victorious leaders, to appeals for peace (Thomson 1995). Like in Europe and America, Canadian war memorials responded to the immense loss of life resulting from World War I whilst also presenting an ideological interpretation of it "which held that the soldiers' deaths had been necessary in order to achieve a better world" (1995: 5). The government of Canada commissioned numerous memorials at this time reflecting the sombreness of such a large-scale loss of life (1995: 11). Nevertheless, as discussed by Denise Thomson, Canadian soldiers' participation and success in pivotal operations such as the Battle of Vimy Ridge, "were felt to have helped crystallize national identity" (1995: 7). According to Robert Harding, politicians, newspapers, and members of the clergy similarly portrayed Newfoundland's (ill-fated) participation in the battle of Beaumont Hamel, France in July 1916 as a "nation-building tool" (2006: 3, 26). While Canadian and Newfoundland war memorialization projects were concerned with communicating the importance of lasting peace in the world, they simultaneously were built to voice Newfoundland and Canada's "increased self-confidence" as nations (1995: 7; Harding 2006).

⁷⁶ Soldiers for the tombs of the Unknown Soldier in Europe and Canada were selected from these military cemeteries (Thomson 1995: 7).

According to Thomson, like each Dominion of the British of Empire that had monuments built or adapted to memorialize dead soldiers whilst also voicing messages of world peace, three new commemorative practices emerging throughout the British Empire after 1918 surfaced in Canada as well (1995: 7). These practices included the sale of artificial poppies, the two-minute silence, and, formal ceremonies of remembrance on the 11th day of November (1995: 7). While the government of Canada adopted these new commemoration practices, Thomson credits Canadian veterans with perpetuating them and making them popular with the general public (1995: 7).

Thomson traces the custom of wearing an artificial poppy to the United States in 1920; from there, it spread to Great Britain and Canada in 1921 (1995: 8). By 1924 it officially represented remembrance throughout the British Empire. The poppy became appropriate to indicate remembrance, Thomson argues, because it was the first flower to “bloom on the ravaged battlefields of France and Flanders” after the war (1995: 8). In Canada, the Great War Veterans Association first organized the sale of artificial poppies in 1925, later to be replaced by the Royal Canadian Legion; who continue to sell poppies to this day (1995: 8; 2019c: www.legion.ca).

According to Thomson, the selling and wearing of artificial poppies served practical and emotional purposes: veterans were employed to manufacture poppies and the money raised by their sale was directed towards support for veterans and wearing poppies provided the general public with means to express their desire to remember the war dead (1995: 8). Many NVMO members likewise wore poppies, sometimes purchased

from the Legion and sometimes in the sturdier form of stitched patches or metal pins affixed to their vests. The latter helped them express remembrance year-round.

The practice of observing two minutes of silence at 11am on the anniversary of the day of the armistice that ended World War I (November 11, 1918) began in 1919, as a result of a telegram sent by King George V to each of Great Britain's Dominions and Colonies (Thomson 1995: 8). People were instructed to observe the silence in stillness, in public places or at work, and to spend that time in silent contemplation of the soldiers who died in the war (1995: 8). The practice remains an important part of Remembrance Day activities in Calgary. NVMO members observed the two-minute silence, alongside gathered members of the public, at the Field of Crosses on Remembrance Day in 2013 and 2014. Riding community members also began their monthly meetings with a two-minute silence in tribute to fallen soldiers throughout the year. At monthly meetings, immediately following their observance of silence, the Sergeant-at-Arms' recited Lieutenant-Colonel John McCrae's famous poem, 'In Flanders Fields' (1915). The poem, in which the war dead plead to not be forgotten by the living, also features poppies (1995: 8).

In 1931, the Government of Canada declared that on November 11 the anniversary of the Armistice would be celebrated as Remembrance Day (1995:10). The establishment of Remembrance Day as a fixed date observed annually came after about a decade of effort by Legion veterans to amend the Armistice Act of 1921, which had established the Monday closest to 11 November as an official day of commemoration called Armistice Day. According to Thomson, veterans were dissatisfied with Armistice

Day because although official ceremonies were held on November 11, Armistice Day merged with Thanksgiving, splitting Canadians' attention between commemoration and Thanksgiving (1995: 9). Many families, according to Thomson, decided to celebrate both on Sunday, as Armistice Day fell on a workday rendering many unable to attend official ceremonies. Both veterans and non-veterans found Armistice Day to be an "inadequate tribute" to those who died fighting in World War I (1995: 9). The veterans who petitioned the government for an annual day of commemoration to be observed every year on November 11 also asked that Armistice Day be replaced by Remembrance Day; drawing attention away from the celebration of the end of World War I and towards the commemoration of the soldiers who died fighting (1995: 9).

In 2013 and 2014, many NVMO veterans arranged to have Remembrance Day off from work. In the context of the NVMO, Remembrance Day was perhaps the most important day of the year. Following months of preparation and weeks of hard work to get the installation ready for the public, between November 1 and 11 the Field of Crosses hosted daily morning and evening flag raising ceremonies, culminating on November 11 with a Remembrance Day service at 11am. The Field of Crosses Memorial Project, during the time of my research, was made up of between 3,400 and 3,700 white crosses installed along a main traffic artery in the city. The crosses commemorated Southern Albertan Canadian Forces members who died in Canadian operations since the Boer War. I discuss the Field of Crosses in detail in section 8.3.

During my field research, Remembrance Day was a full day of activity for riding community members. They met before sunrise to participate in the flag raising ceremony

at the Field of Crosses, followed by breakfast at a nearby restaurant, and then returned to the Field of Crosses to again participate in the Remembrance Day services beginning mid-morning. Veteran riding community members participated in the flag rising and Remembrance Day ceremonies as flag bearers and dressed in their formal NVMO kit. Selected members also stood around the flagpole for the two minutes of silence at 11am. The rest of the membership, including veterans and supporters, stood at attention⁷⁷ among the crosses. After the Remembrance Day ceremony, riding community members sometimes spent some time wandering through the crosses and speaking to members of the public. At about 1pm, members gathered at the bar in which they held their monthly meetings for a more or less private celebration.

The riding community's own Remembrance Day celebrations that I attended provided veterans with an opportunity to mourn their losses—of friends who died on operations, of their military sense of emplacement since release, and, for some, of their youth spent in the service. I think about the celebrations as alternatively jovial and possessing a level gravitas, perhaps like a funeral reception. William touched upon this tone when we discussed the riding community's Remembrance Day celebrations:

William: Can't be all about work and no play. And I think that's when we do our Remembrance Day when we usually all get together and have our good blow-out, because we're there with our buddies that we lost. That's very important. You know you have to be able to share that and whatnot. And then hey I miss that person or whatever because whatever happened... But I'm glad I'm here with you, we can share this moment and tomorrow will be a new day. But we'll always have Remembrance Day. And you know what? I used to see that as a kid growing up with all veterans. Because we used to do Legion tours when I was a cadet. And the

⁷⁷ Veteran members stood at attention as they had been trained to do in the Canadian Forces. Supporters, respectfully, mimicked the veterans; standing at attention as best we could.

veterans would be there, living it up. Living in the moment from oh 1940 whatever or you know wherever they were.

Karen: It was an emotional day. Even I felt emotional.

William: Oh for sure. This year was nicer too. I wonder what this year is gonna bring. Hopefully it won't be like minus 20 [*for the morning flag raising ceremony at the Field of Crosses*]. G'ahhhh! Very somber. But a celebration day. That's what I like about it. At least for me. Lots of memories and I'm there with my family. Good.

Thomson describes the change of name for Canada's day of commemoration for the war dead of World War I, from Armistice Day to Remembrance Day, as representing Legion veterans' first "recognition of the necessity for (*veterans*) to assert control over Canadian commemoration of the Great War" (1995: 10, 24). As I will discuss later, this sense of guardianship over commemoration of Canada's war dead, from each of Canada's military operations, remained part of remembrance practice in the NVMO in 2013 and 2014. Based on my observations and conversations with veteran riding community members, they too saw themselves as "standing between Canadians remembering and forgetting" (Thomson 1995: 24).

While tribute to the war dead remained important for Canadians following World War II, according to Thomson, memorialization practices shifted once again; towards the more practical (1995: 20). According to a 1944 Gallop poll, Canadians believed that rather than the continued commissioning of somber memorials, the practice of memorialization would be better expressed by building "useful" ones; including, "playgrounds, hospitals, schools, and the like" (Thomson 1995: 23). This turn towards the practical took place in Europe and the USA as well, according to Hass (1998: 58-60). Memorial commissions and "local communities," she argues, "expressed more interest in

spending money on municipal improvements than in setting ideology in stone” (1998: 59). In the USA for example, by 1948, the sacrifices and contributions of soldiers killed fighting in World War II became interpreted by Americans of that time period as reminders “of the importance to enjoy, maybe even the duty to enjoy, the benefits of free industrial capitalism for which 175,000 Americans had died” (Haas 1998: 60). Memorial municipal improvement projects in the United States included highways, bridges, playgrounds, and football fields; their commission meant as tribute for the ideals over which the war was fought rather than to the individual soldiers who died (Haas 1998: 59-60).

If, by the period following World War II, the government of Canada’s practice of war memorialization shifted its focus away from individual fallen soldiers, Remembrance Day as practiced by the riding community maintained a focus on Canada’s individual war dead. One reason for this, as indicated by William above, is because some veterans in the NVMO used Remembrance Day as an opportunity to openly mourn their military related losses, including the loss of friends who were killed on military operations. From this perspective, Remembrance Day provides an apt example of one of the ways in which signification operated in the riding community as an emplacing process (Jackson 2008: xxvii). In acts of signification, according to Jackson, lived experiences perceived by individuals as private are transformed into “forms that may be shared” (2008: xxvii). Such transformation may occur through conversation; in which people compare experiences, share experiences or make an effort to see things from others’ points of view (2008: xxvii). While an individual’s “sense of an event”—veterans’ experiences of loss of

important relationships to death or military release, for example—“may be inexpressible and personal” argues Jackson, “signification mediates connections with other points of view, perspectives, other people” (2008: xxvii). By practicing acts of signification, like openly mourning their losses together on Remembrance Day, veteran riding community members made The Road a place from which they could derive empowerment and comfort.⁷⁸

Canada’s war dead also remained central to members’ participation in the politics of remembrance. Riding community veterans commemorated the fallen and simultaneously endeavoured to establish continuity with them, as a way to narrow civilian-veteran gaps in understanding and mitigate experiences of secondary wounding and other aspects of dis-emplacement. In the sections that follow I will discuss examples of these efforts.

8.2 Acknowledgement and Relevance through Remembrance

I have noted here and in earlier chapters that veteran riding community members sometimes described their encounters with civilians outside the NVMO as dissatisfying because of civilians’ lack of understanding of veterans and veterans’ military experiences. According to Richard, veterans’ frustration with their encounters with civilians was nothing new. Below, he is responding to my observation that the civilian-veteran understanding gap seemed to compound some veterans’ experiences of transition back into civilian arenas of engagement:

I think, most Canadians have like had no direct contact with the military

⁷⁸ Chapter One of this thesis, *Existentiality in Place*, includes more on the relationship between sense of emplacement and ontological security (Also see Giddens 1991).

whatsoever. So there's not a lot of understanding... I mean I've been involved in a lot of discussions with a lot of very intelligent, educated, otherwise well-rounded Canadians who have not got the first idea of anything whatsoever to do the military so I'm not surprised to hear that. And when you try to explain to people that you've been in a war, you've been in combat. Um it's, there's no—there isn't any common reference for the average Canadian to relate to that. And you may know that that problem is not new. And that problem is the genesis of the Canadian Legion... That when we, you know we, in the First World War, we put 600,000 people in uniform. When they came out of the Army in 1918, 1919, they'd been through you know an extremely bloody war uh and who did they have to talk to? So you know in the early 1920s the Legion was formed to give folks a place to get together, talk to other people who could share it with them. Similar experience after the Second World War, we pumped 1 million folks in uniform they all, almost all got out in 1945. Who do they have to talk to? The Legion was the place you could go and talk to people who knew what it was like. Uh yeah I mean what, how do you talk to people about that? They, it's difficult for people to understand what you're talking about. Most, it's difficult for people to understand anything about the military in the first place. We, we're a different society for a lot of reasons. So yeah I would have to agree with what you're saying. I find it myself and I am sure that with guys that have been involved in very brutal, intense combat it would be that much more difficult.

I encountered enough expressions of dissatisfaction with civilian encounters that I added a question about it to my interview schedule. I asked veterans whether they thought the civilian-veteran understanding gap they described to me should become narrower, and if they thought it should; I asked how they might benefit from its narrowing.

Responses to my question generally fell into two categories: responses related to acknowledgement, and responses related to relevance. In our exchange below, Colin exemplifies a response related to acknowledgement; acknowledgment by civilians of the relationship between the relative comforts of everyday life in Canada and the efforts of Canadian veterans:

Karen: The remembrance month activities—there are so many of them—they seem to me almost like it, like a public awareness—

Colin: Yes

Karen: And what are you making the public aware of?

Colin: Being grateful for what you have. What we did to provide that and what everybody else has done in the world wars uh to give you your luxuries you have today.

Karen: So basically saying—

Colin: Be thankful. Yep... The families of veterans are there for us. But most of the population take it for granted. So um I think they need to be more aware of what we've done to make Canada a better place and where we've been and what we've been through, to be thankful and show respect. The older generation realize it but the younger generation, they take everything for granted. And until you've gone without and been in a tough situation you don't realize what you have had, what you have, and what it took to get that. So I think every Canadian should be made to suffer to appreciate what they have.

Whereas Colin was concerned that civilian Canadians took the relationship between veterans' military contributions and sacrifices and the comfort of their everyday lives in Canada for granted, Amber expressed frustration with civilian Canadians who seemed unwilling to acknowledge that compensation for veterans' sacrifices and contributions was appropriate:

I think it's really a lack of awareness. Like they just don't know. Whereas sometimes I think it's uncaring-ness. Like I know I talked to one guy... and said, well you know really the military and Canadian government has a responsibility to these guys. Right? Like they signed on to do service but at the same time when they come back from wherever they've been, whether it's Yugoslavia or Afghanistan or wherever. They need to be looked after. Like whether they were wounded mentally or wounded physically or whatever. And uh the attitude was, well they signed up. Right? You know, they signed up. And I said, well they signed up but they didn't sign up to lose limbs or to come back so mentally ill that they can't function with their families. And those kinds of things. They didn't know, and nobody does, at 19 and 20 years old that you could be facing this in ten years and come back to a society where you can't function anymore. Because that, the difference between that six or nine months that you're overseas serving wherever, that situation is so drastic and so changing that you come back and you need tons of support in order to be able to, to integrate back into a society that's so different from that experience. Even though it's the one that you came from.

Right? So. You know and there was this attitude that, yeah. Well it's not my problem. And I don't see why taxes should have to go to that...

According to some riding community veterans and their families, then, civilians should better understand veterans because the narrowing of that understanding gap would help solicit civilian acknowledgement of veterans' sacrifices and contributions, and, civilian acknowledgement of the appropriateness and legitimacy of veterans' sense of entitlement to compensation for their sacrifices and contributions. Based on my conversations and observations, civilian acknowledgment of both could potentially mitigate some veterans' experiences of secondary wounding.

Other veteran riding community members told me that civilians needed to understand veterans better so that veterans' issues remained relevant in national conversation. Jack explains the importance of maintaining such relevance in our exchange below:

Karen: ... And talking to the community. Like actually going to the schools and like—

Jack: ... It allows them to share their experience with the younger generation. Let the younger generation know that—what they did and why they did it. And—

Karen: Why do you think that's valuable?

Jack: Because they [*civilians*] will forget. With the way that the world is going right now and especially—and I think what they're concerned about, and I understand this—is they're concerned that now the Afghan conflict is over with? It's going to go back to the same way it was in the nineties. Where nobody wants to see the military around, everybody thinks it's just a drain on resources. You should not be in the military; we shouldn't have a military, yada, yada, yada. And I think that's what they're afraid of and I think that by teaching younger generations that, that will keep that from happening... Now that the conflict is dying off, it's going to get pushed to the background. I mean the Canadian military is already cutting military spending because they don't need it anymore. I

can kind of get that understanding. We don't need to spend all that money right now. We have other priorities and stuff like that. But by the same token you can't forget what these guys did. We just can't let them fly to the wayside. Especially the wounded ones and the problems they're having. So. But generally speaking, unless we keep the awareness up by having an organization like the *NVMO* or anybody else. And being a public presence, the public will forget.

I interpret Jack's comments to mean that further widening of the civilian/veteran understanding gap could result in diminishing public support for government resources allotted to veterans' health and wellness. Some veterans were therefore motivated to participate in remembrance practices meant to narrow the civilian-veteran understanding gap to ensure that veterans' issues remained relevant, even when Canadian military operations overseas were no longer as prominent in the media.

While Victor similarly expressed his agreement that veterans generally benefit from narrowing the civilian-veteran understanding gap, he also noted that the endeavour of establishing better understanding has tended to fall solely on veterans; rather than being shared with civilians:⁷⁹

... I mean what we've been talking about you know transitioning in and out is, is that's what it's all about. It's all about that gap and trying to, trying to get past that. And it seems to me that the people who have to make the adjustment are the veterans. So the question is, is there a way of getting the civilians to make some adjustments too and recognize that. I don't know if there is or not.

I believe the burden of adjustment described by Victor is an apt expression of his, and likely other veterans', sense of dis-emplacement in civilian places.

The civilian-veteran understanding gap that I have discussed in this section differs from the civilian-veteran understanding gap I discussed in the previous chapter. Unlike

⁷⁹ I also refer to this burden of adjustment in Chapter Six, section two, as part of my discussion of post-release wounding experiences.

the gap I addressed in Chapter Seven, between civilian supporter members of the NVMO and veteran members, I locate the gap I discuss here between veteran NVMO members and civilians living outside of NVMO membership. Quinn cited this gap as one of her motivations for participating in the Field of Crosses Memorial Project:

Quinn: It's not something you are doing for yourself, let's put it that way. Okay? You are doing it for your community to make sure everybody remembers all the fallen. And that—uh, the only benefit I can say other than that is that it makes me feel like thank you very much for putting your life down... Yeah, that's more like a remembrance thing.

Karen: And when you talk about community, do you mean community of veterans?

Quinn: In general. The community in general. Because it's not just for the veterans. You're doing it so that everybody sees it. From the little ones to the big ones... When we have civilians working with us for that they have—now they can understand why we're doing it. And they understand, you know, this—again, it's remembering. Help keeping the remembrance alive. So that all those lives didn't go for nothing. So by getting the civilians involved into it, they see all the effort we are putting into the remembrance. And they can see who's fallen.

According to Quinn, riding community members' participation in the installation of the Field of Crosses Memorial Project provided at least one way for veterans to share the burden of adjustment referred to above by Victor; if only for a few weekends per year.

8.3 The Field of Crosses

The installation of the Field of Crosses is an annual project, which, in 2013 and 2014, was completed over three weekends in October and November. The display was made up of between 3,400 and 3,700 white crosses⁸⁰ installed in a park along Memorial Drive, a major artery in Calgary. The crosses commemorated individual soldiers from Southern

⁸⁰ A handful of Stars of David, to indicate fallen Canadian Forces members who were Jewish, were also installed in the Field of Crosses.

Alberta who died in Canadian operations since the Boer War. Volunteers installed them “in military cemetery formation” and the display was open to the public between the first and eleventh days of November (2019: www.fieldofcrosses.com). A Calgary businessman, Murray McCann, got the idea for the installation after visiting a small community in the United States, which had erected crosses by the side of the road to commemorate fallen soldiers. McCann first organized the project in 2008 with The Calgary Poppy Fund. His family’s foundation has funded the annual project since (2019: www.fieldofcrosses.com). At the time of my field research, the NVMO had been involved in the project for several years.

In 2013 and 2014, volunteers prepared for the installation of the display at separate sites in two quadrants of Calgary, a warehouse in the South and a park along Memorial Drive in the North. I visited both sites in 2013 and one site (the park only) in 2014. The volunteers I spoke with at the warehouse in the South were largely civilian, and while none of them were members of the NVMO, many (although not all) had personal connections of some kind with the Canadian Forces. These (mostly) civilian volunteers researched, repaired, washed, organized, and bundled the crosses. On installation day many of them also helped transport the crosses to the park in the North, where they joined other volunteers, including veteran and supporter members of the NVMO, to erect the crosses. Installation day was the last weekend before November 1.

Over the same three weekends, volunteers in the North prepared the park for the installation of the crosses. With a few exceptions, these volunteers were made up mostly of NVMO members. Riding community members had the park surveyed to determine the

best way to install the crosses and then set to work preparing the field. Preparation began with spray painting equidistant dots on the grass to establish a template for drilling holes. Executive officers assigned teams to first measure and spray the dots, followed by teams tasked with prepping the holes for drilling, teams tasked with using a larger drill to enlarge the holes, and then a team tasked with placing the cross bases inside the holes. Once all the bases were in, the field was ready for the installation of the crosses. As I have noted above, on installation day both groups of volunteers—civilian and veteran—worked together to erect the crosses.

The crosses themselves were made of two bars of white plastic. From left to right on the horizontal bar, visitors to the memorial display could read each fallen Canadian Forces member's name (last name first), military decoration, age at death, rank, Regiment or Unit, and finally, date of death. Finally, NVMO members, along with the other volunteers, placed small Canadian flags on the vertical bar. NVMO members and volunteers placed the flags above the horizontal bar and affixed them with two rubber bands.

The Field of Crosses is a massive display of names with no bodies. Nevertheless, it incorporates aspects of Euro-North American memorial traditions from various time periods. Like World War I memorialization projects in Europe, it sombrely recalls the ideas of sacrifice and loss. Like the military cemetery at Gettysburg, the Field of Crosses also commemorates individual soldiers; and while, by design, it resembles a military cemetery, it is not one. Finally, recalling the practical-minded memorial projects that followed World War II, the Field of Crosses has been located in a park along Memorial

Drive, which is itself an ongoing memorial project in the city of Calgary. According to the city, this ongoing project had been informed by Euro-North American war memorialization traditions of the past (2018a: www.calgary.ca).

Unlike the styles of memorialization I have discussed so far in this chapter however, projects built to be long-standing bulwarks against forgetting, the Field of Crosses has been a temporary display. During my fieldwork, NVMO members and other volunteers took the display down the morning of November 12. The temporariness of the Field of Crosses was a very significant part of its design. The display's relatively sudden appearance and disappearance, community members told me, was meant to be compelling and to capture the public's attention for 11 days in November. According to members, the Field of Crosses would carry less impact as a permanent display because people would become so accustomed to seeing it everyday that they would stop seeing it at all. Its temporariness, they argued, enabled its particular capacity to prompt reflection.

8.4 Co-presence at the Field of Crosses

As an example of the politics of remembrance, I believe the Field of Crosses also operated in some (but not all) ways like spontaneous memorials, as discussed by Erika Doss (2007). Spontaneous memorials are a kind of public memorial that makes grieving both public and participatory (2007: 306). They function, Doss argues, to commemorate the recently, suddenly, and usually traumatically dead (2007: 300). Spontaneous memorials include, for example, roadside memorials that recall fatal car or motorcycle accidents and memorials that emerge at the sites of bombings or mass shootings in "Europe and the Americas" (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2007: 2; Doss 2007: 306;

Ortiz 2013). Spontaneous memorials, according to Doss, are also arenas of engagement—places—in which people embody grief and potentially effect change:

Grief is an intense and explosive emotion, a passion easily translated into violence and outrage... Spontaneous memorials embody this structure of feeling as well as efforts to assuage it: they both express and manage the psychic crisis and social disorder of death and loss via materialist (*and*) kinesthetic... modes of mourning... Some spontaneous memorials are actively engaged in social and political transformation: in granting personhood to previously silenced subjects, and in demanding inclusion for those subjects within an expanded national imaginary (Doss 2007: 315).

Commemoration at the Field of Crosses similarly takes on materialist, kinesthetic, and potentially transformative qualities. Also similar to spontaneous memorials as described by Doss, encounters at the Field of Crosses potentially produce change, mostly regarding visitors' awareness of riding community members' continuity with Canada's war dead.

Peter Jan Margry and Cristina Sánchez-Carretero argue that spontaneous memorials have several characteristics in common in Europe and North and South America (2007: 2). Items accumulate at these sites; usually including flowers, stuffed animals, balloons, and condolence cards (Doss 2007: 299). These items are intended partly as “offerings” for the suddenly and traumatically dead and partly intended to send specific messages via the media to its audiences (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2007: 2). While spontaneous memorials may aesthetically reflect the “prevailing religion” they are not necessarily “religiously based” (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2007: 2). Lastly, spontaneous memorials are unofficial; they are not sanctioned by any institution in particular, and therefore are not easily controlled by authorities (Margry and Sánchez-Carretero 2007: 2).

This last characteristic does not apply to the Field of Crosses; which has been

officially sanctioned, both municipally and through private and non-profit organizations. Furthermore, the Field of Crosses, while temporary, was never a spontaneous endeavour.⁸¹ Nonetheless, to varying degrees, other characteristics noted by Margry and Sánchez-Carretero do apply. I did not observe visitors to the Field of Crosses leaving offerings in the form of stuffed animals, balloons or condolence cards. Visitors did, however, occasionally leave flowers or floral wreaths at the memorial. While the Field of Crosses was not a Christian-based memorial project, floral wreaths are typical of Christian funerals (Doss 2007: 298). Moreover, the project itself was made up almost entirely of crosses, widely recognized as a symbol of Christianity. The Field of Crosses also shared the characteristic of messaging with Margry and Sánchez-Carretero's perspective on spontaneous memorials.

According to the authors, items left at the site of a fatal car crash (for example) are simultaneously performances of mourning and expressions of protest or discontent; which rebuke behaviours like speeding, drunk driving, or a municipality's poor maintenance of road conditions (2007: 1-2). These are messages of reproach that, in the examples

⁸¹ It is worth noting that according to Doss the term 'spontaneous' may in fact be misleading:

As creative products of human thought and emotional need, spontaneous memorials help to mediate the psychic crisis of sudden and often inexplicable loss. Indeed, the word "spontaneous" is really a misnomer. Spontaneous memorials are actually highly orchestrated performances of mourning: rituals of visibly public lamentation aimed at expressing, codifying, and ultimately managing grief. Their spontaneity is only in their origination, in their swift response to the sudden and unexpected events of tragic and traumatic death. Their materiality, however, are highly scripted (Doss 2006: 298).

discussed by the authors, were “followed by political demands and the promise of strong political support for particular causes” (2007: 2). At the Field of Crosses, NVMO members similarly described their interactions with crosses, floral wreaths, and visitors as simultaneously an opportunity to commemorate fallen soldiers and convey messages.

The messages conveyed by veterans through the installation were perhaps subtler than those described by Doss, more entreaty than outright rebuke (although somewhat so). Moreover, the messages I focus on were not conveyed through the media to audiences consuming the memorial from off-site. News media were present at both Remembrance Day ceremonies that I attended at the Field of Crosses, and television crews interviewed NVMO members when they visited the park during the preparation weekends leading up to Remembrance Day. However, veterans’ messages were meant for the civilian visitors in attendance alongside them. Veteran riding community members deployed messages through their co-presence with civilian visitors at the site, and their co-presence is more relevant to this discussion of veterans’ participation in the politics of remembrance than the experiences of media audiences who did not attend the memorial in person.

Rather than being conveyed via news media to television or print audiences, veterans’ messages to visitors at the Field of Crosses—mostly in the contexts of relevance and acknowledgement, as discussed earlier—were embodied. They were also emplacing. I revisit my discussion on social, public, and affective remembering⁸² from Chapter One

⁸² Chapter 1.4.3, *Remembering in Place*, includes more detailed discussion of the processes of social, collective, public and affective remembering.

to show how (Casey 2004: 20; Bennett 2002). According to Casey, social remembering is a process of “co-remiscing” which takes place between people who already know each other (2004: 21). Social remembering occurs in real time—in person or over the telephone or Internet, for example—but need not occur in any particular geographic area. I observed social remembering at the Field of Crosses at monthly meetings, at pubs during riding outings, and at various other sites of gathering among NVMO members. NVMO members, for example, often co-remisced about motorcycle incidents and accidents, or, military experiences they had shared. Social remembering among veterans often took place while they were accomplishing a task, preparing the park for installation of the crosses for example, or, guarding the Field of Crosses overnight against Halloween vandalism.⁸³ I interpret these contexts of social remembering as potentially emplacing forms of signification (Jackson 2008). Social remembering in such contexts was also, importantly, a form of legitimate peripheral participation/learning (Lave and Wenger 1991). It was often by observing and participating in social remembering that new-coming veterans learned from older-time riding community members what kind of messages to convey (and sometimes not convey) to civilians outside the NVMO, including visitors at the Field of Crosses.

Unlike social remembering in which participants know and have some history with one another, public remembering is more outward facing. It requires participants to encounter one another in a particular place; but they need not know each other before gathering there (Casey 2004: 32). It is the site of encounter itself that prompts or draws

⁸³ In 2013, NVMO members took shifts at the Field of Crosses overnight on October 31, to prevent potential Halloween mischief by the public.

out the remembering. According to Casey, the co-presence of people at a particular site, gathered in common purpose—veterans and visitors to the Field of Crosses gathered to commemorate Canada’s war dead on Remembrance Day, for example—naturally generates a temporary arena of engagement in which people share thoughts, memories and discussions they might not otherwise have an opportunity to share (2004: 32). Like the above examples of social remembering in the NVMO, there is also an embodied quality to public remembering (2004: 34-35). At the Field of Crosses, for example, riding community veterans, civilian volunteers, and visitors walked through the rows of crosses. Sometimes they talked to one another, touched the crosses, or took photos. According to some veteran riding community members, their co-presence at the Field of Crosses was meaningful because veterans wanted visitors to be emotionally affected by their encounters with the installation—encounters rendered possible by the installations’ existence (Bennett 2002: 334).

According to Jill Bennett, while the intangibility of trauma makes its experience almost impossible to share with others, the “affective impact” of trauma (or grief) may be communicated to other people through encounters with art (2002: 334). Through art encounters, argues Bennett, audiences may be transformed into witnesses of traumatic experience (2003: 28). In such contexts, the art piece triggers an emotionally impactful, pre-reflective response in audiences, which in turn draws audience focus onto the experiencers of trauma (or grief). Experiencers of trauma are usually featured by the art and may (or may not) also be the individual(s) who created the art. So, as audiences focus

on the artful depiction of the experience of trauma (or grief), they simultaneously become witnesses to it.

I believe that on Remembrance Day at the Field of Crosses, the processes of public remembering similarly transformed some visitors into witnesses of veterans' release bereavement. The crosses identified Canadian men and women who died in military service to Canada. Ceremonies at the Field of Crosses, on Remembrance Day in particular, included speeches and recitations that referenced the military sacrifices and contributions of the war dead. I believe that visitor and veteran co-presence at the Field of Crosses, their mutual participation in public remembering—including encountering the wreaths, the crosses themselves, and each other—potentially enabled visitors to imagine continuity between the dead soldiers represented by the crosses and the living veterans who helped install them. Ian's comments about the difficulties he associated with participation are helpful here:

Remembrance Day, like that whole—actually it sort of starts in October. Because we've been working with the crosses and all the names you know you walk past people that you know that are on those names. And uh it kind of brings it all home really quickly. That's a hard time of year for me but I still, I think it's important to not forget these people. So that's why I do it is to make sure they're remembered.

Ian is referring to the military sacrifices and contributions made by the soldiers identified by the crosses, those people, who, he told me, should not be forgotten. Some of the names also represented relationships that were lost to him. I am suggesting that through Ian and other NVMO members' co-presence with visitors at the Field of Crosses on Remembrance Day, visitors were presented with an opportunity to extend their imagination from what the dead had done and lost, to co-attending NVMO members'

military contributions and losses as well. I approach this potential for visitors' perceptions of continuity—between the war dead and breathing veterans—as another form of signification, enabled by visitors' art-like encounters with the Field of Crosses and its creators.

William's comments below suggest that civilian encounters with the crosses can create further opportunities for signification, and thereby, opportunities for civilians to acknowledge veterans' military experiences and contributions:

On Remembrance Day when people come out in droves to go see those crosses and they go, wow. I didn't know it but I knew that guy or I knew his family or whatnot and they have stories to share and then that person's family comes out and you know talks to us and we talk to them and we support them.

According to William, the families of fallen soldiers sometimes sought out veterans' company on Remembrance Day at the field of Crosses for conversation or support. I also observed visitors walk through the installment and then initiate conversations with veterans. In one conversation I observed, for example, civilians asked questions about veterans' spouses and the New Veterans Charter, giving veterans an opportunity to discuss their experiences and/or perspectives related to those topics. I conceive of these encounters, mediated through the installation, as potentially emplacing for veterans because they involve civilian acknowledgement of their military knowledge and experience, and, perhaps implicitly, of riding community veterans' own losses, sacrifices and contributions. I therefore approach this affective aspect of public remembering at the Field of Crosses as having played a role in the mitigation of dis-emplacing experiences like release bereavement and secondary wounding among some veteran riding community members.

Doss' perspective on spontaneous memorials has been helpful for teasing out the affective qualities of civilian-veteran encounters at The Field of Crosses; which were enabled by the co-present nature of the public remembering that took place there (Bennett 2002; Casey 2004). "Spontaneous memorials" argues Doss "are meant to be felt—not simply seen" (2007: 300). They "are often aggressively physical entities: spaces that must be walked around... places that demand our physical attention..." (2007: 300). If public remembering was more temporary than spontaneous at the Field of Crosses, it similarly demanded visitors' attention. Importantly, I believe it prompted visitors to remember the veterans in attendance alongside them, and not only to commemorate the dead. I believe such attention to have been emplacing for some veteran riding community members.

8.5 Deploying Remembrance: peacemaking, nightmares, and youth

Margry and Sánchez-Carretero, as I have noted, approach spontaneous memorials as sites of simultaneous commemoration and rebuke, where the latter sometimes prompts demand and/or promises for political change. Similarly, some veterans told me that following their encounters at the Field of Crosses they hoped visitors would feel more supportive regarding ongoing veterans' issues. An example would be the allocation of government resources to living veterans' health and wellness. "If we can get the word out" William told me, "we benefit. And then maybe the governments will step up and say, 'oh you know what? We have to provide more programs.'" The Field of Crosses is one of the ways, albeit a subtler one, in which veterans deployed remembrance to get 'the word out.' In this section I will discuss further, less implicit, examples of riding community members' efforts to raise awareness; specifically, through their participation in school

visits.

As indicated by William, 'the word' included gaining civilian approval of government support programs for Canadian Forces veterans, which he in turn hoped would lead to more programs. Riding community veterans also participated in remembrance events to dispute inaccuracies they perceived in civilian Canadians' ideas about them in particular, Canadian Forces veterans in general, and some of the work they did as Canadian Forces members. A few NVMO members set about accomplishing this by accepting invitations to speak to middle and high school students in Calgary. While participation in the Field of Crosses helped narrow the civilian-veteran understanding gap by providing an intimate setting (compared to larger, more formal Remembrance Day events organized by the city) in which civilians outside the NVMO and veterans could interact with one another, some veterans used school visits to share their particular experiences.

During the October monthly meetings of both years I spent with the NVMO, the president reminded members that veterans were invited to Calgary schools to participate in various Remembrance Day blocks that students across the city were studying. Altogether, seven veterans accepted the invitations and made seven visits to four schools in the month of November. Veterans wore their dress kit, and, as the visits were scheduled during the school day, they all made arrangements to take time off work to attend. Each veteran prepared a talk that fit into a class period of about 45 minutes, and, between one and three veterans spoke per period. Some veterans used power point slides to accompany their talks while others preferred to address students without an

accompanying slide presentation. Most veterans interacted with students throughout their talks by asking questions and all but one school permitted students to ask veterans their own questions, usually toward the end of the class periods. Also in three out of four schools, students gathered around the veterans following their presentations; to chat, ask more questions, and sometimes even to request autographs.

According to veterans, these opportunities to interact with students, as a group and then later individually, were quite special. Veterans referred to the November school visits as, “cathartic,” “rewarding” and a “great experience.” Warren’s comments, part of our conversation about civilian awareness of veterans’ military experiences, provide an example:

... When we, not this year but last year, when we went to that school up in the Northeast? I was so nervous about that. For like two weeks before I was stressed right out and when we sat in the bar afterwards and we had a beer and we were talkin’ about it. And it was, that was the most amazing feeling in the world...

As Warren notes, he, another veteran, and I, went to a bar following that particular visit. At the bar, veterans discussed their shared experience at the school and then reminisced and exchanged military stories. I approach that school visit, along with the bar meeting that followed, as another example of how signification operated in the riding community; in this context, also very much a part of how veteran members practiced the politics of remembrance.

What veterans found so satisfying about the school visits, I believe, were the ways in which visits afforded veterans opportunities to, from their perspective, correct inaccuracies related to Canadian constructions of Canadian Forces veterans and the work of peacekeeping:

Karen: So if I'm understanding right, what you're getting out of these kinds of things—getting into the community, basically, is in a way educating...

Greg: Yeah

Karen: Saying this is what we are. We're real—

Greg: Yeah. This is what we've done and we tell you the stories that we want you to know. We can't tell them all the stories... but you gotta explain to him that there are kids your age carrying guns. And they go 'oh wow.' Say yeah there's kids your age that they're burying every day...

Greg went on to describe an incident that he witnessed on a peacekeeping tour in which he participated, along with his frustration with rules of engagement that kept him from acting: "I couldn't fire my gun at nobody I just watched..." The incident involved violence against children. Greg's comment, "we tell you the stories that we want you to know," powerfully conveys his perception that the idea of peacekeeping, as it has been constructed in Canada (since perhaps the Korean War), has been sanitized for civilians; and that he participated in school visits, in part, to subvert that construction. Other veterans who participated in school visits shared Greg's perception and gave similar reasons for their decisions to talk to students. As Greg's comments allude, each veteran's presentation addressed one or both of the following themes: peacekeeping operations were potentially hazardous, and, peacekeeping operations sometimes negatively impacted Canadian Forces members for years after the conflict.

According to David Jefferess, in Canada, United Nations military operations in which Canadian Forces members have participated since about the Korean War are constructed through one of two narratives of peacekeeping. Peacekeeping operations are either "acts of responsible action (i.e., bringing peace to the Other)," or, "aberrations in an otherwise continuous narrative of Canada's benevolent action in the world" (2009: 709).

These two narratives, Jefferess argues, helps protect and reproduce civilian Canadians' identification with Canada as a peacekeeping nation, despite its participation in numerous violent or dangerous operations that involved troops in combat situations. Canadian Forces operations in Somalia, Rwanda, and the Balkans in the 1990s are examples. (2009: 710). Jefferess refers to the construction of peacekeeping according to these narratives as a "national mythology," created to obfuscate the reality that Canadian peacekeepers have participated in both combat and violence whilst deployed (2009: 725). One veteran similarly described to me the myth of peacekeeping: "it's not in the Canadian culture to have wars."

Referring to Canadian Forces veterans who served tours of duty in the Balkans in the 1990's, Jack and Irene add to this sentiment the matter of civilian acknowledgement:

Jack: ... Things like Bosnia and Croatia and stuff like that, most of the public, the general public didn't even know they were over there doing it. They were on a peacekeeping mission. Yeah okay, it is a peacekeeping mission but it's not like they're standing there saying, you know, breaking up a fist fight. They're parking themselves between armed conflict. And they're still in a war zone. And it's not really a peacekeeping mission. They had a war. But they weren't recognized for that when they came home.

Irene made similar comments about the dangers of peacekeeping and the comparative absence of acknowledgement afforded to Canadian peacekeepers by the general public:

We had a PPCLI⁸⁴ unit in combat, in Bosnia. Even though Canada didn't know about it. And we've had peacekeepers killed on every mission. Did they get the big accolades and the ramp ceremonies and everything? Nope. They didn't. Did anybody know they died? Only their families. And their unit. And also the guys that are killing themselves. It is huge.

Throughout this thesis, I have connected the failure of civilian Canada to acknowledge

⁸⁴ Irene is referring to the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry Regiment (PPCLI).

veterans' combat experiences in the Balkans (and other peacekeeping era operations) to secondary wounding experiences. NVMO members' practice of the politics of remembrance through school visits was one of the ways in which participation in the NVMO helped mitigate such forms of dis-emplacement.

Some of the veteran riding community members who participated in school visits chose to confront conventional constructions of peacekeeping in their presentations. Glenn, for example, confronted the construction of peacekeeping operations as not dangerous as compared to war. He described his own experiences in Yugoslavia in the 1990s, including the difficult living conditions and the dangerous work he did there. He also told students the following about peacekeeping:

This was real. [*Yugoslavia*] was real. It wasn't peacekeeping it was peacemaking. Canada has this illusion—or delusion—that as soon as we send peacekeepers over there they don't get hurt. They're just peacekeepers. We've lost 110 soldiers on peacekeeping missions. Total. They [*combatants*] don't care what colour your beret is. They don't care if you're driving a white vehicle.⁸⁵ If you're in their way, you become a target.

Glenn then showed students slides of his own photos, including a United Nations vehicle and helmet riddled with bullets, and additional vehicles destroyed by mine explosions. He accompanied some of the slides with stories about the injuries sustained by his friends in those same explosions. Later in his talk, to once again underscore what Glenn described as a misconception Canadians held about peacekeeping, Glenn referred to what he called “the cost” of his tour in Yugoslavia: “in six months,” he told students, “we had two dead, eight wounded in the service of peace.” Glenn then named those soldiers.

⁸⁵ Glenn was referring to United Nations berets, which were blue, and United Nations vehicles, which were white.

Greg also chose to share a little bit about the cost of peacekeeping with students. Rather than talk about the hazards and injuries that have been sustained by Canadian Forces members on operations however, Greg talked about how such experiences may affect veterans after their tours of duty have been completed:

... There's so many of us... been to a whole bunch of other places you don't wanna go. And served. And when they've come out they, basically, are hurting. You can't kick a memory out of your head. You see a child on a road. Half here half there. He doesn't leave. It's not a—the kid's gonna get up like a cartoon and go back... You go to a family that's been wiped out. You can't leave it. It's still in your head. After you get out of the military, it never leaves. I still have nightmares...

Greg participated in school visits each November, and while he often spoke about how much he valued the opportunity to share the stories he wanted to tell with young people in Calgary, he also told me that the experience was quite difficult for him.

Greg was not the only veteran to describe their participation as simultaneously meaningful and difficult (or even triggering). Warren, for example, began to reconsider one of his experiences in a new way as result of his decision to participate in school visits. He made the following comments to me during our interview:

Remembrance Day last year really affected me and brought back memories that I haven't thought about in 30 years... Um so yeah so things like that, it does dwell on ya and that was 30, 30 years later and last year I was in the thick of the crosses⁸⁶ and um trying to think of things to talk about at the school talks and I was having nightmares and like shit that I haven't thought about in, in 30 years. And it was like, I freaked her out a couple of times, wake up in the middle of the night swingin.' And it's like holy crap. And I talked to [*names another NVMO member*] about it and he said yeah that's PTSD, dude... I blocked it out. I blocked it out I guess...

Like Glenn and Greg, Warren did not share graphic descriptions with students of

⁸⁶ Warren is referring to his participation, with other NVMO members, in the preparation and installation of the Field of Crosses.

incidents he experienced whilst deployed, but he similarly confronted what he considered to be civilians' misconceptions about Canadian military service since the Korean War with his own experiences.

Warren brought students' attention to the Cold War. Cold War veterans, he told me, had been similarly left out of civilian Canada's construction of the Canadian veteran. In order to confront this misconception, Warren talked about serving "in the thick" of the Cold War on a Navy ship, and the tensions and challenges involved in hunting and chasing American and Soviet submarines. Like Glenn, Warren also told students about difficult living conditions and nightmarish situations he dealt with at sea. His comments below are from one of his presentations:

The North Atlantic is not a friendly place. The water temperature is five degrees C in the middle of the summertime. Come wintertime it's more like slush but it's six feet deep. It's cold. You go over the side you've got about three minutes to live. Part of the Canadian Navy's duty is to support the civil power as well. In our case it usually means answering an SOS for a ship in distress. More often than not, rather than saving lives it becomes a recovery mission...

As with Glenn and Greg, I see Warren's practice of the politics of remembrance at school visits—his confrontation of perceived misconceptions about the realities of military service during the Cold War—as including signification, a process I believe to have been emplacing.

In addition to correcting inaccuracies veterans perceived in civilians' ideas about peacekeeping, Cold War service, and the ways in which some peacekeeping and Cold War operations have continued to impact veterans long after the conclusion of their deployments, most presenters also addressed inaccuracies they perceived in civilians' ideas about Canadian veterans; specifically, their relative youth. According to Richard,

since the Korean War,

Canadians didn't have any visibility of veterans. To most Canadians a veteran was a little old chap with a blue blazer who showed up at the Legion on Remembrance Day. Most veterans in this country are under 50 years of age. A lot of them are under 30 years of age. That's only just now clicking with Canadians.

When I asked him how veterans benefitted from participation in the Field of Crosses and school visits, Greg answered similarly:

... Not just benefits us it makes people aware of what you are. And lets the kids understand that we're not that old guy from World War I, II and Korea... The Field of Crosses... it lets people know that there are people that care and they get to see the names of the people that died. And it's nice when the kids come down and look at it and they see the kids like you know eighteen, nineteen, twenty, twenty-five, twenty-six. Like you know they're almost their age. And you know these are the people that went over and fought so that you could have what you have...

I have interpreted riding community members' accounts of encounters with civilians who were not 'aware of what' veterans 'are' as at least frustrating, and potentially as experiences of secondary wounding. Amber and Ian, for example, described an encounter in which Ian was immediately dismissed as a veteran because of his relative youth, while driving a vehicle that explicitly identified him as such:

Amber: You would talk to civilians and they had no idea right?

Ian: Well they've asked me, because I have a veteran plate? They've asked me if I'm driving my dad's car. I've been asked that before.

Karen: And how do you respond?

Ian: Mostly I just look at them and laugh and walk away or I say, yeah. I'm a vet.

Ian went on to explain that this sort of thing rarely happened when he was riding his motorcycle because typically veteran riding community members wore their NVMO kit (including NVMO vest and badges) whilst riding. However, Zoe described an encounter

she and her partner had in which the NVMO gear they wore was not enough to convince a civilian they encountered. Zoe was a supporter member; her partner was a NVMO veteran:

Zoe: You wear that *[NVMO]* jacket and then you explain to people. Like we were in uh Bed, Bath and Beyond a couple of weeks ago. *[Names her partner]* and I are both wearing it. And this lady is like, “Canadian Army veteran? You guys don’t look old enough to be veterans.” And *[names her partner]* is like “I’m forty-one years old. I did it since I was seventeen”. And they’re like, she’s was like, “really”? And I said, “I’m forty. I could have but I’m supporting him.” And then she was like, “wow.” She was like, you wouldn’t think that. When you think of a veteran you think of a grey old crippled man that’s standing at the Poppy—

Karen: That’s what she said?

Zoe: Yep. And I said, “yeah.” And that’s what people think of. They don’t think of the fact that a veteran can be somebody who went over and two years later had to come home because medically something happened. And they could be in their early thirties. They’re a veteran. You know so I think there should be more recognition.

Based on the opening of his presentation, Glenn too sought improved civilian acknowledgment for younger people who have served. Glenn, like most of the veterans who spoke to students, pursued such acknowledgment through his participation in school visits (and other remembrance events):

I’m just gonna start off with a question. Do you think I’m old enough to be a veteran? *[Some students replied ‘no’ and others replied ‘yes’.]* Veterans—a common perception is a veteran is an old man with a walker uh wearing a Legion blazer. That’s false. ‘Kay? ... And those old men that you see now when they came back in 1918 or 1945 they were young men. They were eighteen, in their twenties, in their thirties. ‘Kay? So in 1945, the heroes that stormed Juno Beach they would have been young men. Younger than I am today. Not much older than you... Those veterans have never stopped being produced. As long as Canada’s had a military we keep producing young veterans. Okay? After World War I was World War II. Five years after was Korea. And between Korea and the present 64 peacekeeping missions. Soldiers going to horrific places dealing with horrific things. Not an all-out war. But still veterans.

By reminding students that many veterans are young when they come back to Canada

after participating in overseas military operations, Glenn created continuity between himself and World War I, World War II, and Korean veterans. In doing so, he inserted himself (and other comparatively young veterans) onto students' remembrance mindscape; which until then included a construction of the Canadian veteran that erased him. He used slides of bullet-ridden kit and mine-destroyed vehicles in Yugoslavia in the 1990s as another way to create continuity between himself and World War I, World War II, and Korean veterans. By establishing continuity with young veterans from past wars, Glenn also established legitimacy for young veterans like himself in the present.

I have approached participation in school visits, like participation in the Field of Crosses, as an example of how veteran riding community members practiced the politics of remembrance to change civilian Canadians' ideas about veterans and the work they have done in military service to Canada. I have argued that, through their informal encounters with veterans at the Field of Crosses, visitors were transformed into witnesses of veterans' release bereavement, and were afforded opportunities to extend their ideas about the characteristics of Canadian veterans to include NVMO members. During school visits, veterans deployed the politics of remembrance more explicitly. Veterans directly confronted conventional constructions of peacekeeping by sharing their own dangerous experiences on peacekeeping operations, along with the lasting and harmful impact of their deployments. Veterans also directly confronted conventional constructions of the Canadian veteran, insisting they were more than "just old guys with canes." By doing so, NVMO members wrote themselves into a remembrance narrative that has, for decades, excluded them and their military contributions and sacrifices. Once again, as I have

argued throughout this thesis, civilian Canada's lack of acknowledgement of their military contributions and sacrifices is embedded in some NVMO members' experiences of dis-emplacement; particularly, secondary wounding. Veterans' solicitation of (and sometimes demand for) civilian acknowledgement of their experiences and their stories about themselves, at remembrance events like the Field of Crosses and school visits, played a role in mitigating secondary wounding experiences for some veterans.

According to many riding community members, November was a difficult time of year for veterans. It triggered their release bereavement and in some cases their operational stress injuries, including post-traumatic stress disorder. Several veterans described school visits to me as a good way to manage the difficult month of remembrance. Practicing the politics of remembrance was also one of the ways in which new-coming members learned how to be old-timers; so, participation in events like the Field of Crosses and school visits played an important role in the process of members' becoming veteran riding community members. I therefore link their practice of the politics of remembrance to veterans' post-release sense of place, made possible through legitimate peripheral participation in the riding community. There are further qualities of riding community members' practice of the politics of remembrance that were re-emplacing.

8.6 Deploying Remembrance: existential sense of place

I have argued that veteran riding community members used remembrance events like the Field of Crosses and school visits to assert continuity with Canadian veterans of past wars, in order to correct misconceptions NVMO veterans perceived in civilians'

ideas about them. According to veterans, participation in remembrance events also helped restore veterans' own sense of connection to the military in their post-release lives. A brief review of place from an existential perspective will be helpful for discussing how the restoration of this connection was re-emplacing for veterans.⁸⁷

According to Casey, an important characteristic of place is its capacity to gather various kinds of things and hold them together in an “arena of engagement”; processes of everyday practical activity, memories, thoughts, language, and ideas about inside-ness and outside-ness, for example (1996: 26). People therefore share experiences in place, and often derive comfort and empowerment from their relationships with those people and things that are gathered by place (1996: 26). A particular quality of comfort and empowerment in place, the quality of ontological security, is relevant to this discussion of the connection between veteran riding community members' participation in the practice of remembrance and sense of emplacement (Giddens 1991: 243).

Giddens defines ontological security as “a sense of continuity and order in events, including those not directly within the perceptual environment of the individual” (1991: 243). An individual's sense of ontological security, he argues, develops in early childhood and continues into adulthood. Ideally, in childhood, individuals trust their caregivers to return, even while they are out of visual range. Children also trust their caregivers to establish a daily and recognizable routine. The continued practice of every day practical activity amongst trustworthy people beyond childhood enables a continued sense of ontological security. An individual's confidence in their daily routine (and their

⁸⁷ Chapter 1.4.2, Existentiality in Place, includes more detailed discussion of this topic.

trust in the people who share it with them) answers the existential questions: “when am I,” “where am I” and “who am I,” in relation to other people and things (1991: 37).

Drawing on Casey and Giddens, then, place may also gather into an “expectable environment” those interactions—between people, and between people and things—that answer the existential questions (Giddens 1991: 41).

While they were serving, the regimented and predicable routine of veterans’ everyday military lives on Canadian Forces bases answered the existential questions: they were participating in military lifeworlds during their military careers (when am I), they were inhabiting military arenas of engagement (where am I), and, veterans were soldiers, sailors and air men and women (who am I). Following Giddens, life in the military once afforded veterans a sense of ontological security, which is necessary to feeling emplaced. For many post-release veterans, particularly those living with operational stress injuries, everyday life in civilian arenas of engagement did not provide them with “a sense of continuity and order in events”; nor could it as clearly answer the existential questions. Veterans no longer inhabited their military careers or military arenas of engagement, and, they were no longer service men and women. I therefore believe that, before joining the veterans riding community, many veterans experienced (varying degrees) of ontological insecurity. Release from the military was dis-emplacing.

Giddens’ point is less that inflexible observance of routine and habit is the way to achieve ontological security, but rather that when people feel ontologically secure—because their everyday practical activities answer the existential questions—they are better positioned to adjust to transition without sustaining serious harm (1991: 40-41).

Transition is less perilous when one has a place, an arena of engagement, from which to derive comfort and empowerment. NVMO veterans no longer had access to military places following their release, making it almost impossible for them to derive comfort or empowerment from military routines or military people. I have argued that severance from this regimented, expected environment resulted for many in a sense of dis-empowerment, often in the form of dys-appearing military skills and habits.

Accompanying those embodied experiences of dys-appearance, however, severed connection to military places also disconnected veterans from their ideas about themselves.

Processes of self-identification, time, and sense of emplacement relate to each other in the production of an expectable environment that answers the existential questions (Giddens 1991: 54; Casey 2001a). According to Giddens, when an individual's everyday practical experiences routinely match and support their sense of self-identification, they are in a position of ontological security. From a position of ontological security, one may communicate a kind of reflexive biography to oneself and to others (1991: 58). For example, a Canadian Forces member who is actively serving may self-identify, and identify themselves to other people, as a soldier. Because their everyday life matches that biographical description, there is continuity in that reflexive biography.

In contrast, discontinuity between one's sense of self-identification and their everyday practical experiences can put an individual in a position of ontological insecurity. In such a state, "time may be comprehended as a series of discrete moments,

each of which severs prior experiences from subsequent ones in such a way that no continuous ‘narrative’ can be sustained” (1991: 55). A retired Canadian Forces member who continues to self-identify as a soldier but whose everyday practical activity neither matches nor supports that reflexive biography is an example of such discontinuity. Prior to their participation in the riding community, I believe that some veterans experienced biographical discontinuity, and that its experience was dis-emplacing. Furthermore, it is my argument that practicing the politics of remembrance, and participation in remembrance events like the Field of Crosses and school visits, played a role in the restoration of some veteran riding community members’ biographical continuity.

In his comments below, Jack discusses participation in remembrance events as a way for veterans to stay connected with their pre-release lives:

Jack: I think that really helps them because it allows them to give back without having to, how do I put this—*[veterans’ participation]* gives back. Allows them to remember what they’ve done. It allows them to remember what’s happened in the past and still show support to the military. Even though they’re civilian they can still show support to what’s going on. Current and past military. So they still have that military connection that way. Yeah. I think that allows them still to maintain a connection to the military. By showing support. Rather than just being Remembrance Day. But this all goes a little step above that... and it actually allows them to do more than just once a year. It allows them to make a commitment, year-round, to the military.

Karen: This project in particular because there are quite a few months to it.

Jack: Right. Exactly. Well any project, because we do many different things. I mean pretty much every month we’re doing something. The proceeds will go to some kind of veterans’ charity. So it actually winds up being pretty much year-round that they’re actually doing something to support the military or veterans, or you know whatever. Yeah, rather than just showing up once a year.

As Jack points out, while November was an extremely active month for the riding community, members were active throughout the year in various ways that helped them

stay connected to their military-ness by “giving back.” Like Jack, Zoe emphasized the opportunity to support and help others as activity that linked NVMO members to their pre-release lives. I asked Zoe what she thought about veteran NVMO members’ interactions with civilians at remembrance (and other) events:

... I find that it’s more, they’re still doing peacekeeper kinda things. Like because if you think of, when I think of like a peacekeeper I think of the guy that’s over there and he’s you know helping the little kid on the street that’s gotta get outta, you know get to school or they’re—like you always see, they always portray the guy giving the little teddy bear to the little kid on the streets in the war-torn countries and all that. So they’re kind of doing community service type work. And then I find like with the *NVMO*, okay. With the floods.⁸⁸ [*Names another riding community member*] got a bunch of people to come to the Quality Inn and they did up hampers and they did up all this stuff. Well that would be like the Red Cross showing up to distribute stuff and the military goes and they help the Red Cross distribute food and rations to people in the war-torn—you know. So I find that what the *NVMO* does for community still is what a military guy would do—or girl—would do. You know because its still your community—would be like doing it for your country... The community benefits but I think the guys do too because they’re still feeling like they’re worth something. Like they’re, like for so many years people depended on them. They’re there. They’re there to help us. And then all of a sudden they’re out and it’s like, there’s nothing. So now they’re still there. I guess it’s giving them like a, like a worth. Like they feel they’re worth, like they’re doing something...

Zoe approaches humanitarian work that she imagines Canadian Forces members to have participated in on United Nations peacekeeping missions, and work that NVMO members’ have done to help people in Calgary, as not only practices that generated a sense of purpose and “worth” in veterans but as practices that created continuity between veterans’ military and post-release lives. NVMO membership, according to Zoe, made it like veterans were “still there”; or more specifically, still in the military and capable of helping.

⁸⁸ Zoe is referring to catastrophic flooding that Calgary and surrounding areas sustained in June of 2013.

Some of the veterans who gave presentations to students seemed to make this connection as well. Glenn, for example, showed slides of dolls that one particular soldier distributed to children in Yugoslavia, as well as slides of his unit helping community members in Quebec during an ice storm in the early 1990s. Glenn's decision to include such photos and stories in his presentation to students seems to categorize 'helping people' as, recalling Gregg's comments, "stories that we want (*civilians*) to know." The importance veterans like Glenn ascribed to the work he did helping people while serving support Zoe's assertion that as a soldier, veterans identified with helping people; and their military release created a dis-emplacing interruption in that biographic continuity.

Richard too suggested that such interruption could potentially be harmful:

I would agree with you hundred percent that people who have found a way to give back or found a way to help other people, I would say it makes the transition a lot easier because you've got, it's an outlet. You know? It's an outlet for um wanting to do—I would imagine the worst thing a guy could possibly do would be get out of the army and sit at home watching television... That would be a killer.

While not an NVMO member, Richard is an Army veteran. He sought out numerous activities, including volunteering for his local fire department, local Victim Services unit, and working with his regimental association, that enabled him to help both civilians and veterans in his community. His participation in such activities, he told me, contributed to what he considered to have been his relatively smooth transition into civilian life following release. It is my argument that participation in remembrance (and other charity events) similarly played a role in mitigating the transition challenges faced by NVMO veterans following military release; because, such practice enabled veterans to continue to help people, as they did when they were in the military.

Colin put the connection between practicing remembrance and restoring continuity with his military past quite succinctly. Participating in remembrance events, he told me, “helps [*NVMO members*] give back to society. It makes them feel good again. They get to organize something and show what they can do.” According to veterans then, membership in the NVMO helped them restore their sense of biographic continuity by helping civilians and veterans, and, by giving them opportunities to take pride in their remembrance related accomplishments. This process of restoration of veteran riding community members’ reflexive biographies may too have operated where older-time veterans modeled to newcomers how to practice the politics of remembrance. Similarly, through the course of their military careers, many veterans would have been accustomed to both leadership roles and more junior roles.

8.7 Re-emplacment and the politics of Remembrance

In this chapter I have discussed the connections between European and North American war memorialization traditions and veteran riding community members’ participation in the politics of remembrance. While these traditions were observable in the ways in which NVMO members practiced remembrance at events like the Field of Crosses, participation in the politics of remembrance at the Field of Crosses differed in important ways from Euro-North American war memorialization tradition as well. In particular, one could observe these differences in how veterans deployed and embodied their co-presence with civilian visitors to the Field of Crosses during the installation process and on Remembrance Day.

By participating in processes of public remembering at the Field of Crosses and

presenting their military experiences to middle and high school students, veteran riding community members sought to narrow gaps they perceived in civilians' understanding of them and of the work they did as Canadian Forces members. According to veterans, encounters with civilians in remembrance contexts created opportunities to solicit civilian acknowledgement of the connections between their military sacrifices and contributions and civilian Canadians' everyday comforts—comforts which some veterans perceived as too frequently taken for granted. Veterans also practiced the politics of remembrance to confront misconceptions they perceived in civilian understandings of peacekeeping work, the potentially long-lasting impacts of participation in peacekeeping operations on mental and emotional wellness, and, the relative youth of Canadian Forces veterans. I posit that, by confronting these misconceptions, veteran riding community members wrote themselves onto students' remembrance mindscape, so that alongside the honoured war dead, riding community veterans' own efforts might too be acknowledged and remembered. These encounters with civilians in remembrance contexts helped mitigate some of the harm veterans had sustained from repeated secondary wounding experiences since their retirement from the military.

Veterans' practice of the politics of remembrance was also a strategy to remain relevant in civilian spheres of conversation about Canadian Forces veterans, and to solicit civilian support for government policies that benefitted veterans and their families. In addition to such practical benefits, veterans' participation in the politics of remembrance helped veterans to transform. From men and women who were no longer soldiers, sailors or airmen, participation in the politics of remembrance was an identifying characteristic

of individuals who were becoming veteran riding community members.

I have approached NVMO members' participation in remembrance events as an example of legitimate peripheral participation in a community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991). Newcomers to the organization learned that the process of becoming a veteran riding community member involved narrowing civilian-veteran gaps in understanding, confronting misconceptions held by civilians about Canadian veterans, and restoring their reflexive biographies as military people. Helping other people helped many of them restore that continuity, which had been interrupted by military release. At remembrance events, and throughout the year, participation in the riding community offered opportunities for veterans to help other veterans, inside and outside the NVMO. Consequently, for some veterans, their everyday practical activity once again began to match their ideas about themselves.

Through their practice of the politics of remembrance, veteran riding community members negotiated elements of dis-emplacement that I have approached as harmful and (sometimes) traumatic: release bereavement, secondary wounding, and ontological insecurity (Giddens 1991). Learning how to practice the politics of remembrance, and how to share that knowledge, was integral to the journey of becoming and producing new riding community veterans. It was therefore integral to the reproduction of the community of practice itself. For veterans new to the community, and those who had been participating in the community for some time, practicing the politics of remembrance was simultaneously re-emplacing.

Chapter Nine: Conclusion

Across varying military careers and experiences, almost every veteran riding community member described experiencing a sense of profound loss following their release from the Canadian Forces—loss of their relationship with the military itself and loss of the relationships that had been gathered in place by it. Retirement from their military careers meant that veterans were separated from familiar and empowering military lifeworlds. Veterans were disconnected from access to a field of social relations that had previously provided them with definitive narratives for self-identification, a sense of ontological security derived from predictable and regimented everyday activity, and a shared sense of purpose. As well, release cut veterans off from daily interaction with individuals whom they trusted, and who shared particular military experiences that few civilian Canadians shared or understood. In this thesis, I have approached this powerful field of relations and engagement, gathered by the military, as a place (Casey 1996, 2001a; Basso 1996). I have approached veterans' disconnection from it, as a result of planned (and sometimes not planned) retirement from their military careers, as having left veterans in a state of post-release dis-emplacement.

I have identified three aspects of the processes of post-release dis-emplacement. These include release bereavement, the dys-appearance of military skills and habits, and, for some veterans who had sustained operational stress injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder during their military careers, post-release wounding or re-traumatization. The argument I advance in this thesis is that NVMO veterans' participation in a community of

mobility practice provided solutions to the problem of post-release dis-emplacement, through veterans' shared practice of motorcycle riding and the politics of remembrance.

I began with a story about my first experience as a passenger on a motorcycle. That first day I joined the riding community as a passenger for an outing, the veteran operating the motorcycle I was on deftly avoided a collision with a sports utility vehicle. Within seconds, and long before I had time to reflect upon what had happened, my immediate fear for my physical safety was replaced by a powerful sense of security, as the other veterans in the group surrounded us with their bikes and bodies, protecting us from traffic as we slowed down to a stop. This experience prompted me to consider the significance of feeling-full and somatic inter-subjective encounters between people, the environment, and motorcycles (Csordas 1994) to contexts of post-release dis-emplacement. My first ride with the NVMO also prompted me to consider whether such encounters played a role in two social processes I learned were relevant to veteran riding community members: the transformation of existential vulnerability into existential security (Giddens 1991), and the transformation of retired Canadian Forces members into new kinds of people (Lave and Wenger 1991). In the introduction of this thesis, I draw on anthropologists' and other social scientists' perspectives on phenomenology, embodiment, and place—in contexts of encounter, existentiality, memory, and motion—to provide some theoretical context for my conception of post-release dis-emplacement and the social processes of re-emplacement through the practices of motorcycle riding and the politics of remembrance.

I have also argued that there is a connection between veterans' experiences with Canada's benefits systems for veterans and their experiences of post-release displacement. In the third chapter of this thesis, I focused on the history of Canada's veterans' benefits systems in the period between World War I and Canada's war in Afghanistan. I addressed how veterans have necessarily, over time, had to organize and advocate for themselves. Drawing on the work of some Canadian historians and a series of documents published by the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman in 2013, I addressed veterans' participation in the improvement of a series of imperfect benefits systems for veterans (Ives 1998; Keshen 1998; Neary 1998; Morton 1998). These include the Pension Act of 1919, the post-World War II veterans' charter, and the New Veterans Charter of 2006.

At the time of my field research, veteran advocates continued to struggle with the Government of Canada for improved compensation, particularly in the contexts of service-related disability and consequent earnings lost, acknowledgement of pain and suffering, and family support. Many veterans emphasized the need for improved family support, as physical and psychological injuries sustained by veterans in military service to Canada also frequently affected family members and other civilians who shared households with injured veterans (Figley 1993; Matsakis 2007). Historically, as a result of this struggle with the Government of Canada for compensation and acknowledgement, and the post-release wounds sustained by many in the course of their struggle, veterans have turned to one another for support. The Royal Canadian Legion was a result of

veterans' organization in response to these historic struggles. The generation of the NVMO, in part, was another.

In 2013 and 2014, one of the important characteristics of the NVMO that distinguished it from an outlaw motorcycle club was the level of commitment it required of its members. As various veteran members informed me throughout my field research, the NVMO prioritized members' family over their commitment to the NVMO. In an outlaw motorcycle club, it is more common that members are required to prioritize the club over family (Librett 2008: 264). In the fourth chapter of this thesis, I discussed further differences between an outlaw motorcycle club and the NVMO, including the NVMO's inclusion of women as members and all members' prerogative to ride the motorcycle brand of their choosing. I also discussed the organization of the NVMO, its executive officer positions, and its general membership, which included veterans of (mostly) the Cold War and Canadian peacekeeping operations from all three branches of the Canadian Forces. The general membership of the NVMO also included civilians.

I argued in Chapter Four that the NVMO managed this diversity within its membership by limiting civilian members' decision-making capacity and clearly delineating the role of civilians as supporters of veteran members. I further argued that diversity among veterans in the riding community was managed by differential access to the resource of intimacy. Where veterans had combat experience or operational stress injuries related to combat in common, the degree of relatability—and thereby, intimacy—was greater between them than between veterans with combat experience and veterans who did not have combat experience. All veterans related to each in other ways, however,

including shared interests in motorcycling and remembrance practices. I discussed the historical (relative) invisibility of women in the Canadian Forces and Canadian women veterans, and argued that in the NVMO, women veterans confronted this history of erasure by wearing patches on their NVMO kit. These patches explicitly identified women as veterans who had made important contributions to the Canadian Forces.

In this thesis, I have designated the period of time following their retirement from the military, in which riding community veterans were “actively dealing with the impact” (O’Connor 1991: 260) of the loss of their relationship with the military, as release bereavement. I have argued that during the period of release bereavement, veterans across a variety of different military careers experienced a sense of loss and isolation. In the fifth chapter of this thesis, I applied various anthropologists’ and other social scientists’ perspectives on bereavement, grief, and mourning, to several losses connected to life in the military (van Gennep 1960; O’Connor 1991; Counts and Counts 1991). These include veterans’ loss of people (who were like kin), their loss of regimented everyday practical activity, their loss of purpose, and, to varying degrees of intensity, their loss of ontological security (Giddens 1991).

The military, as a place, had gathered all these elements of veterans’ military lifeworlds—people, everyday practical activity, sense of purpose, and sense of ontological security—into an arena of engagement (Casey 1996, 2001a). I have argued that veterans had derived a sense of emplacement from inhabiting the military as a place. Furthermore, following their release from the military, veterans experienced a sense of dis-emplacement in the form of release bereavement. In Chapter Five, I argued that there

is also an embodied aspect of release bereavement. Drawing on Leder's concept of the dys-appearing body, I have contended that veterans "incorporated" various skills and habits during their careers as Canadian Forces members (1991: 31). Veterans' incorporated military skills and habits were functional and appropriate in military places. However, for some veteran riding community members, their incorporated military skills and habits persisted into various civilian arenas of engagements, including public and work places. In such civilian places, veterans experienced their incorporated military skills and habits as disruptive. It has been my argument that veteran riding community members also experienced this dys-appearance (Leder 1991) of their incorporated military skills and habits in civilian arenas of engagement as dis-emplacing.

Some veterans who were living with operational stress injuries like post-traumatic stress disorder sustained further dis-emplacing, re-traumatizing wounds during the period following their military release. Drawing on Matsakis' concept of secondary wounding (1996), in the sixth chapter of this thesis, I identified another form of post-release dis-emplacement: post-release wounding. I cited examples of veteran trauma survivors who: 1) had their traumatic experiences disbelieved, denied or discounted, 2) were blamed and/or stigmatized for their trauma, or, 3) were denied assistance by the professionals, service members, friends, and other caregivers to whom they had gone to for emotional, financial, or medical help (Matsakis 1996: 90). I linked some of these re-wounding experiences to the National Defence Department's decision, in the 1990s, to keep secret from the Canadian public Canadian Forces soldiers' involvement in combat situations in the former Yugoslavia (Windsor 2000, Off 2004).

I identified three kinds of post-release secondary wounding experiences: wounding by the institution, wounding by civilian society, and wounding by other veterans. Drawing on Jackson (2008), I further connected veterans' secondary wounding experiences to veterans' perception of failure on the part of Veteran Affairs Canada and the Department of National Defence, Canadian civilians and media outlets, and older veterans, to reciprocate the existential good of acknowledgment (Jackson 2008: 43). I have argued that in exchange for risking their lives, bodies, and minds in military service to Canada, many wounded veterans—particularly veterans of Canadian military operations in the Balkans in the 1990s—expected support and acknowledgement of their military contributions and sacrifices in return. I have proposed that veterans' perception of Canadian institutions', civilians', and other veterans' failure to meet their obligation of reciprocation—by supporting and acknowledging veterans' military contributions and sacrifices—was wounding, isolating, and dis-emplacing for some retired veterans.

In this thesis, I have submitted the processes of post-release dis-emplacement—the experiences of release bereavement, the dys-appearance of military skills and habits, and post-release wounding—as the problem. I have argued that veterans generated solutions to the problem of dis-emplacement by practicing riding and remembrance, as part of a mobilized community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991) that I refer to as the NVMO (National Veterans Motorcycle Organization). In Chapter Seven, I approached veterans' participation in the NVMO as (re) emplacing (Casey 1996; Basso 1996; Casey 2001a).

A community of practice develops around people's mutual participation in interests that they share (Lave and Wenger 1991). In a community of practice, participation is synonymous with social learning. Newcomers learn how to become members by participating in shared interests with older-time members. As newcomers learn how to participate in community activities, they learn to self-identify as new kinds of people—members of the community of practice (1991). In this thesis, I approached the NVMO as an aggregate of veterans (and some civilian supporters) who came together around their shared interests in motorcycling and the military as a community of mobility practice (Lave and Wenger 1991; Millka 1992; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Shelley and Urry 2006; Jensen 2009; Cresswell 2010a; Cresswell 2010b). Through their learning/participation in four social processes, former Canadian Forces members became veteran riding community members. I identified these social processes as: the freedom nexus, the de-isolation of loss, witnessing transformation, and bridging the understanding gap.

My conception of a freedom nexus draws on Michalowski and Dubisch's notion of positive and negative expressions of freedom (2001). Motorcycle riding, I have argued, enabled veteran riding community members some distraction from stressful thoughts. These included thoughts related to operational stress injuries, struggles with Veterans Affairs Canada or adjusting to civilian workplaces, and other everyday pressures of family and social life. Motorcycle riding also provided NVMO veterans with relief from dys-appearing military skills and habits. Hyper-vigilance and hyper-alertness habits (Whelan 2016), for example, which were sometimes disruptive in civilian arenas of

engagement, became functional and necessary to the safe operation of a motorcycle. In these contexts, motorcycle riding together enabled veterans to express negative forms of freedom (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001)—freedom *from* particular everyday stressors they experienced as dis-emplacing.

Participation in the NVMO was simultaneously a process of identification for riding community veterans (Lave and Wenger 1991). Practicing motorcycle riding and other related activities enabled veterans to express positive forms of freedom (Michalowski and Dubisch 2001)—freedom *to* become organized, busy, and engaged veteran riding community members with a shared sense of purpose and accomplishment. I have contended that participation/learning in the freedom nexus afforded veterans a sense of belonging and purpose that mitigated experiences of post-release loss and isolation that were dis-emplacing.

I have approached motorcycle riding in the NVMO, and all its associated relationships and practices, as a place. I have referred to it as the Road. My conception of the Road as a place is informed by the work of various social scientists who study mobilities (Millka 1992; Hannam, Sheller and Urry 2006; Sheller and Urry 2006; Jensen 2009; Cresswell 2010a; Cresswell 2010b). Relevant to my conception of the Road as a place is the contention that social processes do not occur exclusively in fixed geographic locations (Jensen 2009; Sheller and Urry 2006). Likewise, in the NVMO, social processes operated in motion, where veteran riding community members spent a lot of time together travelling on motorways, highways, streets and roads. Drawing on mobilities perspectives, I have also attended to the affective, embodied aspects of motorcycling in

the NVMO, and argued that they too played a role in the generation of the Road as a mobilized place (Spinney 2006; Pinch and Reimer 212).

I have identified the processes of de-isolating loss as another emplacing quality of participation/learning in the NVMO. Drawing on Jackson's concept of signification, I have discussed how emplacement (or re-emplacement) operated in these contexts.

According to Jackson, the process of signification involves the transformation of individuals' lived experiences—which they have perceived as inexpressible and private—into “forms that may be shared” (2008: xxvii). In the NVMO, veterans shared their military experiences and their struggles since military release, including their experiences of release bereavement, their perceptions of failure by government institutions and civilian Canada to support or acknowledge them adequately, and other post-release, dis-emplacing struggles. Moreover, NVMO veterans acknowledged each other's losses and struggles. On the (mobilized) Road, signification also operated in the context of sense-memory (Bennett 2002). Veterans shared—through talking, riding, and talking about riding—the affective impact of not just release bereavement and the disruptive experience of dys-appearing military skills and habits, but also the affective impact of riding, a practice that I contend has helped them to mitigate those conditions of dis-emplacement.

In contexts of de-isolating loss, the road (as a mobile place) afforded new community members access to other members' shared and similar experiences, including those experiential, sensory memories of being in the military and retiring from it. Such sense memories were difficult to articulate to non-members, but made sense to other veterans (Fentress and Wickham 1992: 3-7). Their participation in these processes of de-

isolating loss created opportunities for veterans to share their losses and struggles with others who had experienced similar losses and struggles. Veteran riding community members also imported into the NVMO familiar, military ways of doing things that helped to lessen the intensity of veterans' release bereavement. Helping others, organizing, and accomplishing tasks together, for example, and reminiscing and relating to one another like brothers and sisters. Through these kinds of signification and familiar practices, I have contended, some veterans' isolating, dis-emplacing sense of loss—of their relationship with military places—became diminished.

I discussed three examples of the processes of witnessing transformation: patching ceremonies, Quilts of Valour ceremonies, and the bestowal of road names. Each of these practices enabled new riding community veterans to have their release bereavement witnessed and acknowledged by other NVMO members. Drawing on work on grief and mourning by anthropologists and other social scientists, I have argued that these NVMO practices operated in similar ways to mourning rites (van Gennep 1960; Eisenbruch 1984; Counts and Counts 1991; O'Connor 1991). As the public expression of private grief, mourning rites also help the bereaved assume new social roles in relation to their loss of a relationship to death (Eisenbruch 1984). Examples include widow, orphan or "childless person" (Counts and Counts 1991: 291). By witnessing the bereaved person's public expression of grief, members of their social group concede the bereaved person's new social status as a result of their loss. With this concession, the bereaved may be reincorporated into the group in their new roles (van Gennep 1960).

I have approached patching ceremonies in the NVMO as similarly transformative. In the NVMO, new members became riding community members over time, through their participation/learning in various community activities. Patching ceremonies, like receiving a Quilt of Valour or a road name, were ways in which older-time members (Lave and Wenger 1991) marked new veteran members' transformation before the rest of the group. I have argued that when a new member (who was a veteran) received their NVMO patch while the group looked on, it gave the group the opportunity to acknowledge the veteran's new role as community member, which the veteran had assumed as a result of their loss of the military. Through their witnessing of the veteran's patching, the group played a role in the transformation of that former Canadian Forces member, who had lost the military, into a veteran riding community member who had gained the riding community.

More informally, older-time veterans also bestowed new veteran members with road names. The bestowal of a road name, I have argued, also publically marked the process of transformation of former Canadian Forces members who had lost the military into veterans who gained the riding community. I have approached these transformative and incorporative ceremonies and practices, and the witnessing of them, as (re)emplacing.

Older-time veterans arranged additional transformation opportunities for particular veterans who were struggling with operational stress and/or re-wounding experiences. Older-time veterans awarded these veteran members with Quilts of Valour, in acknowledgement of their particular struggles, including release bereavement.

According to O'Connor, grief that remains unexpressed—in public, for example, through a mourning rite of some kind—remains unresolved (O'Connor 1991). I have posited that the awarding of Quilts of Valour to struggling veteran members similarly played a role in the resolution of some veterans' release bereavement, and, moved them along in their journey of transformation from new veteran members into older-time veterans (Lave and Wenger 1991). Because of their transformative and incorporative qualities, I have argued that Quilts of Valour ceremonies were also (re) emplacing.

Veteran riding community members' participation in practices that bridged the civilian-veteran understanding gap was also emplacing. I have contended that the Road gathered numerous opportunities for veterans and civilian supporters to share experiences and conversations with one another. Veterans and civilian supporter members could talk about motorcycles, motorcycle riding, and they could ride together right away. I have argued that over time, these encounters with empathetic civilian supporters, in contexts of riding, fundraising, and remembrance activities, played a role in narrowing civilian-veteran understanding gaps. I have posited that these encounters potentially also played a role—if sometimes only a limited one—in the mitigation of some veterans' generalized distrust of all civilians (as a result post-release wounding experiences).

In the eighth chapter of this thesis, I have argued that veteran riding community members' participation in the politics of remembrance was also (re) emplacing. In particular, practicing the politics of remembrance helped mitigate the dis-emplacing conditions of release bereavement and secondary wounding. In this chapter, I focused on two processes of participation/learning that operated where veteran riding community

members and civilians who were not members of the NVMO encountered one another.

These include encounters at the Field of Crosses and during school visits.

I discussed some historical traditions of war memorialization in Europe and North America, and posited that while several of these historical practices were observable in veterans' participation in the Field of Crosses Memorial Project, the Field of Crosses also differed in important ways. These differences were observable in how veterans deployed and embodied their co-presence with civilian visitors to the Field of Crosses in contexts of public remembering (Casey 2004; Doss 2007). Drawing on Casey, I have argued that the co-presence of NVMO veterans and (non-supporter) civilians at the Field of Crosses, gathered in common purpose—to commemorate Canada's war dead on Remembrance Day—generated a temporary arena of engagement which afforded them opportunities to share thoughts, memories, and discussions they might not otherwise have had an opportunity to share (2004: 32). I have argued that veterans used these encounters to solicit civilian awareness and acknowledgement of the connections between their military sacrifices and contributions and civilian Canadians' everyday comforts. Veterans also deployed their co-presence with civilian visitors at the Field of Crosses to prompt civilians to consider veterans' continuity with the war dead they had, together, assembled to commemorate.

Veterans also practiced the politics of remembrance to confront misconceptions they perceived in civilian understandings of peacekeeping work, the potentially long-lasting impacts of participation in peacekeeping operations on their mental and emotional wellness, and, the relative youth of Canadian Forces veterans. The politics of

remembrance in these contexts were particularly observable during school visits that occurred during the month of November, wherein a handful of veteran riding community members accepted invitations from local middle and high schools to participate in Remembrance Day teaching blocs. I have argued that by confronting these misconceptions during school visits, veteran riding community members wrote themselves onto students' remembrance mindscape, so that alongside the honoured war dead, riding community veterans' own efforts might too be acknowledged and remembered. These encounters with civilians in remembrance contexts helped mitigate some of the harm veterans had sustained from repeated secondary wounding experiences since their retirement from the military.

I have connected veterans' practicing of the politics of remembrance to practical benefits as well. Veteran riding community members practiced the politics of remembrance to remain relevant in civilian spheres of conversation about Canadian Forces veterans. By maintaining their relevance through these contexts of encounter with civilians beyond the NVMO, veterans sought to solicit civilian support for government policies that benefitted them and their families.

Lastly, I approached veterans' participation in the politics of remembrance as practice that helped veterans to restore their reflexive biographies as military people (Giddens 1991). Using examples from my field research, I have argued that when veterans were in the military, they had associated helping people with their identification as Canadian Force members, and, with their sense purpose and worth. Following their military release, this sense of identification, purpose, and worth was interrupted.

Participation in the riding community, at remembrance events and throughout the year, afforded veterans numerous opportunities to help others once again. Examples include helping other veterans and their families by organizing and participating in fund-raising and charity events, and, helping the larger civilian population through their involvement in post-flood support and particular charity rides. Some remembrance (and other) practices thereby created continuity between veterans' military and post-release lives. Through participation in the NVMO, veterans' everyday practical activity once again began to match their ideas about themselves. I have argued that the restoration of veterans' reflexive biographies was transformative—by practicing remembrance, men and women who were no longer soldiers, sailors or airmen, learned to become veteran riding community members—and emplacing.

One of the first challenges I encountered during this research project was locating a physical field site (Chapter Two). After some searching, I discovered the NVMO. The local unit leadership soon granted me access to the riding community, which brought with it opportunities to introduce my research to the general membership and invite them to participate in it (Chapter Two). As I began to talk with NVMO members, and spend time with them at monthly meetings, charity events and riding outings, I encountered a second challenge: finding a way to conceptually approach veteran riding community members' post-release experiences in a way that could accommodate the range of experiences they represented.

I encountered veteran members who self-identified as living with post-traumatic stress disorder they had sustained during their military careers which continued to

challenge them following their military release. I encountered riding community members who did not self-identify as struggling with operational stress injuries. During their military careers, some veteran riding community members had served on the ‘front lines’ of dangerous Canadian operations overseas, while others worked exclusively within Canadian military operations bases. I also spoke to a few veteran members who were never deployed outside Canada during their military careers. Across this diversity of military experience, however, almost every veteran I spoke with similarly described their experience of the period of time following their military release as burdened by a sense of loss and isolation.

As I have discussed above (and throughout this thesis), veterans’ descriptions of their post-release struggles reminded me of the experience of grief; which led me to conceive of the period of time in which veterans had struggled with the loss of their relationship to the military as release bereavement. I consider the concept of release bereavement to be one of the major contributions of this thesis. It is an inclusive perspective, which can potentially lead us to better understand the challenges faced by all Canadian Forces members. In particular, it clarifies the impacts of military release on veterans whose struggles are both profound and lasting, but perhaps not directly related to trauma they had sustained in combat. Better understanding of those struggles faced by veterans representing diverse military experiences could, potentially, lead to improved provision of support—by Canadian government institutions and civilian society—following their exit from their military careers.

The over-arching findings of this thesis can be stated in three parts. First, the veteran riding community members whom I encountered during the course of my fieldwork experienced the period of time following their release from the military as a form of grief. I have referred to this period of time as release bereavement. While death is a powerful cause of grief among human beings, it is not the only cause. Veteran riding community members suffered the loss of their relationship to the military, as a place, with “similar intensity” (Jackson 2008: 104). Second, among the veteran riding community members who participated in my research, release bereavement was an emplacement problem. Release bereavement is one process in a cluster of three social processes that make up the processes of post-release dis-emplacement. In addition to release bereavement, the processes of post-release dis-emplacement include the dys-appearance of military skills and habits and post-release wounding experiences. Finally, as members of a mobilized community of practice (Lave and Wenger 1991), together, NVMO veterans had learned to mitigate some of the harmful and wounding experiences of post-release dis-emplacement through the practices of motorcycle riding and the politics of remembrance.

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Appendix One

List of Abbreviations

DND: Department of National Defence

MFRC: Military Family Resources Centre

NCM: Non-commissioned member

NVC: New Veterans Charter

OMC: outlaw motorcycle club

OSI: operational stress injury

PTSD: post-traumatic stress disorder

QOV: Quilts of Valour

UN: United Nations

UNPROFOR: United Nations Protection Force

VAC: Veterans Affairs Canada

VO: Veterans Ombudsman

VP: Vice President

Appendix Two Ethics Approval Documentation



Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)

Office of Research - IIC2010C
St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7
Tel: 709 864-2561 Fax: 709 864-4612
www.mun.ca/research

ICEHR Number:	2012-278-AR
Approval Period:	February 16, 2012 – February 28, 2013
Funding Source:	SSHRC; Scholarships
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Sharon Roseman Department of Anthropology
Title of Project:	<i>Practicing family in Canada's army</i>

February 16, 2012

Ms. Karen Samuels
Department of Anthropology
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Samuels:

Thank you for your email correspondence of February 13, 2012 addressing the issues raised by the Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) concerning the above-named research project.

The ICEHR has re-examined the proposal with the clarification and revisions submitted and is satisfied that concerns raised by the Committee have been adequately addressed. In accordance with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, the project has been granted *full ethics clearance* to February 28, 2013.

If you intend to make changes during the course of the project which may give rise to ethical concerns, please forward a description of these changes to Mrs. Brenda Lye at icehr@mun.ca for the Committee's consideration.

The TCPS2 requires that you submit an annual status report on your project to the ICEHR, should the research carry on beyond February 28, 2013. Also to comply with the TCPS2, please notify us upon completion on your project.

We wish you success with your research.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'MS Shute'.

Michael Shute, Th.D.
Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

MS/bl

copy: Supervisors – Dr. Sharon Roseman, Department of Anthropology

ICEHR Number:	2012-278-AR
Approval Period:	February 16, 2012 – February 28, 2013
Funding Agency:	SSHRC Doctoral Scholarship
Responsible Faculty:	Dr. Sharon Roseman Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Arts
Title of Project:	<i>Practicing family in Canada's army</i>
Amendment #:	01

July 17, 2012

Ms. Karen Samuels
Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Arts
Memorial University of Newfoundland

Dear Ms. Samuels:

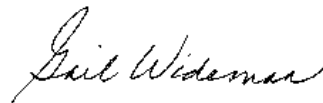
The Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR) has reviewed the proposed addendum for the above referenced project, as outlined in your email correspondence dated May 25, 31, and July 16, 2012, and is pleased to give its approval to change the study location (Calgary instead of Canadian Forces Base Edmonton), type of participants (retired veterans and their civilian relatives instead of infantry soldiers), and recruitment via online communities of veterans and the military magazine *Esprit de Corps*, as requested, provided all previously approved protocols are followed.

If you should make any other changes either in the planning or during the conduct of the research that may affect ethical relations with human participants, please forward a description of these changes to Theresa Heath at icehr@mun.ca for further review by the Committee.

Your ethics clearance for this project expires February 28, 2013, at which time you must submit an annual status report to ICEHR. Also, to comply with the *Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2)*, please notify us when research on this project concludes.

Thank you for the update on your proposal and we wish you well with your research.

Yours sincerely,



Gail Wideman, Ph.D.
Vice-Chair, Interdisciplinary Committee on
Ethics in Human Research

GW/th

copy: Supervisor – Dr. Sharon Roseman, Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Arts

2/17/2020

Memorial University of Newfoundland Mail - ICEHR Clearance # 2012-278-AR – EXTENDED



Samuels, Karen Lynn <kls170@mun.ca>

ICEHR Clearance # 2012-278-AR – EXTENDED

1 message

dgulliver@mun.ca <dgulliver@mun.ca>

Mon, Feb 17, 2020 at 6:28 AM

To: "Samuels Karen(Principal Investigator)" <kls170@mun.ca>

Cc: "Roseman Sharon(Supervisor)" <sroseman@mun.ca>, dgulliver@mun.ca



ICEHR Approval #:	2012-278-AR
Researcher Portal File #:	20121042
Project Title:	(2012-278-AR) Practicing family in Canada's army
Associated Funding:	Not Funded
Supervisor:	Dr. Sharon Roseman
Clearance expiry date:	February 28, 2021

Dear Ms. Karen Samuels:

Thank you for your response to our request for an annual update advising that your project will continue without any changes that would affect ethical relations with human participants.

On behalf of the Chair of ICEHR, I wish to advise that the ethics clearance for this project has been extended to **February 28, 2021**. The *Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans* (TCPS2) requires that you submit another annual update to ICEHR on your project prior to this date.

We wish you well with the continuation of your research.

Sincerely,

DEBBY GULLIVER

Interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR)
Memorial University of Newfoundland

St. John's, NL | A1C 5S7

Bruneau Centre for Research and Innovation | Room IIC 2010C

T: (709) 864-2561 |

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