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The Experiences and Contributions of Women Following the British Army During the Seven Years' War

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The Experiences and Contributions of Women Following the British Army During the Seven
Years' War

By

James Dennison

A Major Research Paper
submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
through the Department of History
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at the University of Windsor.

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The Experiences and Contributions of Women Following the British Army During the Seven
Years' War

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Declaration of Originality

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Abstract

For much of history women followed with European armies on campaign. They filled auxiliary roles for the army and supported their men. Though history has often overlooked them, they are consistently present in primary material. Camp women during the Seven Years' War (1754 to 1763) lived a hard life, much like soldiers. Yet despite attempts by officers to limit their numbers, as well as the difficult and dangerous living conditions, women continued to follow the army and proved to be both helpful and a hindrance to military officials. This paper examines the experiences of these women and in doing so will shed some light on their lives and what may have motivated them, or forced them, into following the army.

Dedication

To my parents for always encouraging me to work hard and to learn more, and to Kyran for supporting me and keeping me focused.

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Introduction

For much of history women followed with European armies on campaign. They filled auxiliary roles for the army and supported their men. Though history has often overlooked them, they are consistently present in primary material. Camp women during the Seven Years' War (1754 to 1763) lived a hard life, much like soldiers. Yet despite attempts by officers to limit their numbers, as well as the difficult and dangerous living conditions, women continued to follow the army and proved to be both helpful and a hindrance to military officials. This paper examines the experiences of these women and in doing so will shed some light on their lives and what may have motivated them, or forced them, into following the army.

Women were tolerated by military officials under the condition that they obeyed military authority and they were willing to fill auxiliary roles when required. In this way women provided their soldier partners with companionship and provided the military with useful female labour. These women were usually assigned to perform tasks typical to their gender at the time, mending clothes, laundressing, cooking, and nursing. Nursing, the most significant of these roles, often gets the most attention in military history and was the most important to military commanders as it was an unpleasant but very necessary duty to care for soldiers often exposed to violence or illness in their line of duty. Women provided the foundation of a family life in a masculine and martial world and so influenced the social make up of army camps. They supported the men, worked alongside them, sold goods, and cared for their families. Looking at the experiences of these women in this context tells us the story of a group of women who have been largely overlooked by history. Their stories provide us with a better understanding of military life during the Seven Years' War and can give us a more complete appreciation of the contributions women made to war making and military life.

Military life was harsh and army women also lived under the threat of military discipline. They also faced the prospect of being one of a relatively small number of women in the highly masculine environment of military encampments. This resulted in women being held in suspicion by misogynistic officers and soldiers alike. Economic uncertainty was also a part of military life. If a woman was officially attached to a man she could have access to some provisions, though only 4-6 women per company of 70-100 was given this privilege. Married women could also have some access to their husband's meagre income but it could barely ensure subsistence and delays in payment could result in dire circumstances. Some women were able to supplement their income by working for the military as nurses, laundresses, and cooks but work could be inconsistent and pay often poor. Women could also work as sutlers, selling goods to soldiers to make a profit, if they had access to goods to sell, though this lifestyle was still subject to changes in economic conditions and military controls. Women who were not officially on the ration roll had even fewer opportunities to work for the army and had less assurance that they would be taken care of if needed. That being said women who followed the army also became part of the camp community, consisting of soldiers, sutlers, children, and other women. They gained the opportunity to work, live, and keep their families together. Military life was dangerous and unpredictable but for many women it was a preferable alternative to abandonment, isolation, or destitution that they could have faced by staying behind.

The Seven Years' War was a global conflict between dominant European powers that took place between 1754 and 1763. This paper focuses on the conflict between France and England in the North American colonies, which is only part of the much larger and more complicated conflict. Commonly referred to as the French and Indian War in the United States, a name which demonstrates the involvement of both the French and of Native allies during the war, the Seven

Years' War reshaped the Americas and cemented British domination in the region while expelling the French. The fighting in North America began when George Washington ambushed a small French force at Great Meadows in May of 1754 in what would be later called the Battle of Jumonville Glen.¹ The French quickly retaliated and defeated Washington at Fort Necessity.² In 1755 Major General Edward Braddock led an army to assault Fort Duquesne but he was decisively defeated and killed in the battle.³ The French then saw some success in the colonies in 1756 and 1757, taking Fort Oswego⁴ and William-Henry, the latter resulting in a massacre of British POW's by France's Native American allies.⁵ In 1758 the tide of the war began to turn in favour of the British.⁶ They successfully took Fort Duquesne, Fort Frontenac and Louisbourg while winning a major naval victory at Cartagena.⁷ Unfortunately for the British, the French managed to win a surprising victory at Ticonderoga. In 1759, the British were able to take forts Niagara and Crown Point from the French and General James Wolfe led the campaign against New France.⁸ Wolfe succeeded in taking Quebec though he died during the battle of the Plains of Abraham.⁹ The British then succeeded in repelling the French attempt to retake the city in 1760. General Jeffery Amherst, who took Louisbourg in 1758, led British forces in the conquest of the rest of New France, forcing the French troops still in Montreal to surrender.¹⁰ Women would have been present at almost all of these events.

¹ Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' and the Fate of Empire in British North American, 1754-1766* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), 53.

² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 62.

³ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 103.

⁴ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 153.

⁵ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 196.

⁶ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 219.

⁷ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 283.

⁸ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 311.

⁹ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 373.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 407.

Chapter 1: Historiography

Only in the last 40 years have historians begun to examine the phenomenon of women following the army in the Eighteenth Century. Women's history and military history acknowledge the presence of women to different degrees and the amount of agency attributed to women often varies. Many historians who focus on giving overviews of the time period's major events and accounts of the war ignore women for the most part. Other sources focus on the social history of soldiers in the British army in North America during the eighteenth century; they draw attention to social issues present in the military including issues of gender though not explicitly focused on women. Historians also examine the social history of women during the eighteenth century and demonstrate women's allotted roles within English-speaking society during this period. They also demonstrate two different, but not mutually exclusive, ways to look at gender in society: as a patriarchal hierarchy; or as two separate social spheres, the female private and male public. Finally, a number of sources examine women following the army. The early sources focus on establishing army policy with regard to women while later sources established women's roles with the army and their contribution to camp life.

The first set of sources is a collection of books which provide general histories of the Seven Years' War. Matt Shumann and Karl Schweizer take a more modern look at the narrative of the Seven Years' War. They admit that the narrative they are presenting has been looked at before but they assert that they focus more on the themes of the war, what caused the war, what the political conditions were, how the war was conducted, and how it was paid for.¹¹ They provide a good overview of the politics and campaigns of the Seven Years' War but say very little about its

¹¹ Matt Schumann and Karl Schweizer, *The Seven Year's War: A transatlantic history* (London: Routledge, 2008), 1.

social history or the lives of soldiers or camp followers. In his book, *Crucible of War* (published in 2000), Fred Anderson attempts to construct a narrative of events during the Seven Years' War period.¹² He argues that “however else one might interpret the postwar era, one must never forget the power of war to shape relations between, and within, empires.”¹³ He provides insight into how the war began and developed, explaining how George Washington had inadvertently set the war in motion and emphasising how individual actions could have extraordinary consequences.¹⁴ Anderson demonstrates how seemingly innocuous events and decisions could have dramatic impacts on empires but he still focuses on the major players, the generals and politicians. He provides a strong America-centric narrative of the war but still overlooks the experiences of the women who served the war effort. He argues that men joined the army for economic reasons and viewed military service as a consensual contract. He demonstrates that it was possible for men to profit from their service and this was the prime motivator for them to join the military. It is reasonable to believe that this could also be a motivator for women to follow the army. Anderson continues to contribute to the discussion of the lives of everyday people, the ways that war influenced them, and also the key events and major players of the American theatre of the Seven Years' War in *The War That Made America*, published in 2005. Here Anderson looks at the Seven Years' War as more than just a prelude to the American Revolution and argues that the consequences of the war would transform the colonists in dramatic ways which would shape America in the future, calling it “the war that made America.”¹⁵ William Fowler looks at the narrative of the Seven Years' War from the perspective

¹² Anderson, *Crucible of War*, xv.

¹³ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, xxii.

¹⁴ Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 7.

¹⁵ Fred Anderson, *The War That Made America: A Short History of the French and Indian War* (New York: Viking, 2005), viii.

of the British and provides a euro-centric focus on the war. He argues that the war differed from most previous wars because it was not just fought over small duchies or familial claims to thrones as many wars in Europe had been up to this point, but that it determined the fate of entire continents.¹⁶ He supports his argument by looking at the beginnings of the war, explaining that “trading conflicts were read against the backdrop of imperial expansion, government ministers in Paris and London interpreted events in the Ohio Valley as sinister proof of the enemy’s intent to attack and rob them of their rightful possessions.”¹⁷ He provides a very character-focused narrative, offering clear biographical sketches of important people at the beginning of the book. Overall, he provides a solid narrative that introduces many important individuals who conducted the war and brings attention to the contributions of Native Americans but he does not bring much attention to women. Daniel Baugh looks at the Seven Years’ War and its importance to the fate of the British and French empires. He argues that the Seven Years’ War was the Great War for empire and was of greatly important in deciding who the major players of the next century would be.¹⁸ Baugh does not mention women and instead focuses on the motivations for the war and less on the motivations and lives of the individuals fighting.

These grand narratives, though some attempt to include elements of social history, all leave women out of the history, neglecting to show them living and struggling alongside their male counterparts. By omitting women from the historical narrative these sources fail to illustrate the contributions that women made to the war effort. Additionally, this omission leaves out the experiences of an entire group of people who lived, worked, and died in military camps and

¹⁶ Fowler, *Empires at War: The French and Indian War and the Struggle for North America, 1754-1763* (New York: Walker, 2005), 1.

¹⁷ Fowler, *Empires at War*, 10.

¹⁸ Daniel Baugh, *The Global Seven Years War, 1754-1763: Britain and France in a Great Power Contest* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 1.

while they may not have been the grand leaders or heroes, their presence was important and shaped military life.

The next set of sources focus on the social history of soldiers serving during the Seven Years' War. In his book *A People's Army* (1984), Fred Anderson looks at the lives of ordinary soldiers in colonial New England. He argues that the Seven Years' War had a profound effect on the lives of people in colonial New England, unifying the people of the region and creating a generation of men with a shared military experience akin to those who returned from the First World War.¹⁹ Anderson also does not mention women in his book, but he does describe daily life and how the soldiers were required to do daily chores which are often attributed to being a part of women's roles in the camps.²⁰ He begins a historical discussion by looking into the lives of ordinary soldiers and while he does not provide information on women he does take part in the vanguard of the social history of soldiers and military life. In *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, published in 1990, Harold Selesky looks at the lives of soldiers. He argues that colonial defense was an important part of colonial society and this military focus demanded a great deal of resources from the colony and its people.²¹ Selesky looks at colonial society and how the colony's defense and military was organized. Specifically, he focuses on how citizens were incentivized to join the army. He explains that for many the interest in earning rights to new lands was a strong motivator while most officers had intangible reasons for serving such as local patriotism or a desire to win favour with the government.²² Selesky concludes that the strain on the colony to incentivize soldiers and wage war was nearly fatal for the colony during

¹⁹ Fred Anderson, *A People's Army: Massachusetts Soldiers and Society in the Seven Years' War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), vii.

²⁰ Anderson, *A People's Army*, 97.

²¹ Harold Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 243.

²² Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 210-11.

the Revolution.²³ Understanding the importance of incentivising soldiers can also reveal what could have incentivised women to follow the army, either as a means of earning rewards for themselves or in support of their partners who hoped to earn a better life for their families.

Shifting focus from New England to the American South and its military policy during the period of the Seven Years' War, John Ferling looks at the groups of people who served in the Virginia army, likewise addressing what the colony did to encourage their enlistment.²⁴ He argues that the army was not only made up of the unskilled and impoverished members of colonial society, yeomen and tradesmen contributing many of the volunteers.²⁵ He concludes that the number of skilled artisans and non-native recruits in the colonial army were representative of the colony's social structure.²⁶ While he does not discuss women, understanding the social makeup of the soldiers can give some indication of the possible social background of the women in the camp as these women would have likely shared the social status of their men. James Titus also examines colonial Virginia, arguing that the economic and social costs of war tell a great deal about the nature of Virginian society during this period.²⁷ In particular he examines how the Virginian government went about organizing its militia and the defence of the colony, as well as how the Virginian people reacted to its policies. He explains that impoverished Virginians valued their freedom and, though no strangers to hardship, they resisted conscription, revealing the libertarian values of many living in the colony.²⁸ Their resistance also demonstrates their aversion to harsh military life. Overall, he does a good job of

²³ Selesky, *War and Society in Colonial Connecticut*, 241.

²⁴ John Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia: Who Served in the French and Indian War?," *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, 94, 3 (July 1986), 308.

²⁵ Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia," 347.

²⁶ Ferling, "Soldiers for Virginia," 328.

²⁷ James Titus, *The Old Dominion at War: Society, Politics, and Warfare in Late Colonial Virginia* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1991), ix.

²⁸ Titus, *The Old Dominion at War*, 148.

demonstrating both how governments approached organizing militia and armies in the colonies and also how local men felt about serving or being drafted. While he does not give insight into the women who followed these men, they came from the same lower-class background and likely had similar values regarding hard work though they were not affected by conscription in the same ways. R.S. Stephenson looks at the provincial soldiers from Pennsylvania, particularly their diverse cultural backgrounds. Writing in response to works like Anderson's *A People's Army*,²⁹ Stephenson argues that there is a need to look at soldiers outside New England during the Seven Years' War and the pluralist composition of the Pennsylvanian provincial forces. He further argues that by being made up of the same ethnic groups as the regular army the Pennsylvanian provincial forces functioned more comfortably with regular British soldiers.³⁰ Stephenson provides insight into the ethnic and social backgrounds of the men, and by extension the women, who made up the Pennsylvania forces.

Peter Way looks at British soldiers as workers in an increasingly capitalist society.³¹ He argues that soldiers were not the scum of the earth as commonly believed, but often skilled tradesmen forced into unemployment by changes to the organization of production.³² Way describes the class of people who made up the British army during the Seven Years' War and also demonstrates that the army became a source of economic opportunity for many dispossessed tradespeople and labourers.³³ Many of the conditions that compelled men to enlist in the army also applied to women providing an explanation for why they chose to follow the army. Women were subjected to economic restructuring that happened over time may have also seen the army

²⁹ R.S. Stephenson, "Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years' War," *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 62, 2. (1995) 196.

³⁰ Stephenson, "Pennsylvania Provincial Soldiers in the Seven Years' War," 206.

³¹ Peter Way, "Class and the Common Soldier in the Seven Years' War," *Labor History* (2003), 455.

³² Way, "Class and the Common Soldier," 462.

³³ Way, "Class and the Common Soldier," 463.

as a way to earn a steady income in those uncertain times. Stephen Brumwell provides insight into how British soldiers and the British military were viewed by the British people. He explains that soldiering was a low caste occupation and soldiers were unpopular and used as a tool of oppression against labouring people.³⁴ Brumwell also demonstrates how soldiers were either enticed or pressed into service. He explains that any recruit was entitled to an enlistment bounty which they could use to “drink to the king’s health.”³⁵ Men could also be pressed into service or drafted, though such men were often seen as undesirable and resented their military service.³⁶ Brumwell also provides some insight into how miserable conditions could then be for those connected to and dependent on a soldier. Michael McConnell demonstrates how soldiers adopted many elements of domestic life while posted in the west far away from most major civilian centres. He explains that out of necessity soldiers would find themselves setting aside drill in favour of droving, woodcutting, gardening, hunting, and foraging.³⁷ McConnell further demonstrates that the presence of auxiliary personal - women, children, servants, and slaves - also contributed to the domesticity of the camps.³⁸ McConnell gives some insight into how the military could gain a semblance of domestic life with some room allowed to women. In summary, these sources demonstrate how soldiers identified themselves during the period of the Seven Years’ War. Together they demonstrate that military life, although it could be harsh and dangerous, also offered a degree of opportunity for men and women who had skills that the army desired. In addition, they show that soldiers were not simply disposable men from society, but a diverse group of people who also often had trade skills.

³⁴Stephen Brumwell, *Redcoats: The British Soldier and War in the Americas, 1755-1763* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 57.

³⁵ Brumwell, *The British Soldier and War in the Americas*, 61.

³⁶ Brumwell, *The British Soldier and War in the Americas*, 62.

³⁷ Michael N. McConnell, *Army and Empire: British Soldiers on the American Frontier* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2004), 148.

³⁸ McConnell, *Army and Empire*, 150.

The next set of sources focuses on women and gender in British society. In addition, they provide insight into the lifestyle of women who did not follow the military and can suggest what may have motivated women to choose army life. Alexandra Shepard looks at how the meaning of manhood changed between 1560 and 1640 and explores its relationship with patriarchal norms.³⁹ She argues that manhood and patriarchy are not the same thing and most men found themselves subjected to its demands even though it favoured them over women in most cases.⁴⁰ She explains that between 1560 and 1640 the ideals of patriarchal manhood, focused on honesty and respectability, became more associated and beneficial to upper class adult married men while other meanings of manhood, drinking and acts of bravado, became linked more with poorer and rougher men whose conduct was considered out of synch with patriarchal values.⁴¹ In this way she demonstrates that while men (and upper class women by proxy) were the primary beneficiaries of patriarchy not all men reaped its full benefits and many were subject to its disapproval. Susan Amussen demonstrates the importance of reputation in working class British society. She explains that a good reputation could protect someone from judgement but rumours and misbehaviour could also cause this to crumble and lead to scrutiny from the local community.⁴² She also explains that the centre of reputation, especially for women, was their sexual behaviour.⁴³ How members of British society judged the reputation of women gives an idea of how reputation could be very valuable to women living in the close quarters of a camp community as well. Bridget Hill provides insight into how marriage was treated by working class members of society. She demonstrates that marriage was relatively easy to enter into, often

³⁹ Alexandra Shepard, *The Meaning of Manhood in Early Modern England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 1

⁴⁰ Shepard, *The Meanings of Manhood*, 1.

⁴¹ Shepard, *The Meanings of Manhood*, 253.

⁴² Susan Dwyer Amussen, *An Ordered Society: Gender and Class in Early Modern Society* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 99.

⁴³ Amussen, *An Ordered Society*, 99.

simply declaring “I will marry thee” could result in a woman being committed to a marriage.⁴⁴ She also explains how common law espousals, entered into without benefit of the church, were seen as less than marriage.⁴⁵ Such arrangements were easier to enter into than marriage but offered women less rights and interests in their spouse’s property.⁴⁶ Hill shows how women could find themselves tied to a soldier with few attractive alternatives other than to follow him.

G.J. Barker-Benfield looks at how in British polite culture, sensibility and manners changed overtime. He focuses on the different meanings of sensibility, both as being sensible and reasonable and as being sensual and overly emotional. To this end, he explains that the ambiguous nature of sensibility played a role in contemporary discussions on gender, attributing the powers of intellect and the pursuit of pleasure and moral superiority to men while attributing delicacy and mental inferiority to women.⁴⁷ In this way, Barker-Benfield demonstrates that this ambiguous rhetoric built up men and undermined women, providing insight into how men and women were separated into distinct spheres of society, developing the concept beyond patriarchal hierarchy. This can also provide some insight into how military policy treated women by attempting to keep women to their own sphere and roles while also attempting to enforce patriarchal military authority. Anthony Fletcher examines the development of gender in the modern sense arguing that between 1500 and 1800 the ideas of manhood and of women as the weaker vessel built the modern models of gender.⁴⁸ He examines both the separate spheres of public and private life which separated men and women and the patriarchal authority women were under, both in their households and in society at large. Women in army camps were still

⁴⁴ Bridget Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics in Eighteenth-Century England* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1994). 205

⁴⁵ Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*, 206.

⁴⁶ Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*, 206.

⁴⁷ Barker-Benfield, *The Culture of Sensibility*, 36.

⁴⁸ Anthony Fletcher *Gender, Sex, and Subordination in England, 1500-1800* (Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), xxii.

treated as weaker vessels and while they participated more in public life they were still held under strict patriarchal authority. Hannah Barker and Elaine Chalus look at how the gender roles of both men and women in eighteenth century England expanded and changed in this period. The book demonstrates that the divide between women in the private sphere of the home and men in the public sphere of the state became less clear-cut and contemporary moralists attempted to resist this change.⁴⁹ The concept of separate spheres for men and women can also be applied to military life where the two spheres were more easily blurred but the army still strictly enforced patriarchal authority. Women following the army played a greater role in public life as they had to perform duties that necessitated they interact with officers and enlisted men. These sources provide insight into how British society viewed women, demonstrating that women had limited access to public activities and life due to social conventions. In addition, they provide a useful reference for how this affected them in military life.

The next set of sources also looks at women in England but with a greater focus on the labouring classes, which have much more in common with soldiers' wives and other camp followers. J.M. Beattie looks at the crimes that women committed and how the legal system treated them. He argues that in the eighteenth century, women in England interacted more directly with society and became more likely to commit crimes as a result.⁵⁰ He further argues working women were vulnerable to economic fluctuations and they were less protected when working for wages, as such they were vulnerable to losing their access to work or having their wages decreased.⁵¹ This vulnerability is also applicable to women following the army, perhaps even more so. Women who followed the army had opportunities to work but the chaotic nature

⁴⁹ Barker and Chalus, *Gender in Eighteenth-Century England*, 1.

⁵⁰ J.M. Beattie, "The Criminality of Women in Eighteenth-Century England," *Journal of Social History*. Vol. 8 (Summer 1975), 109.

⁵¹ Beattie, "The Criminality of Women," 109.

of military life meant that their circumstances could change drastically very quickly. Margaret Hunt looks at gendered violence and oppression in the home in eighteenth century England. She argues that women who rebelled against their husbands paid a high cost but were, in some cases, aided by other men and women in society.⁵² She shows that women could face oppression in their own homes under the threat of physical violence from their husbands. She also shows how society at that time tolerated such behaviour and oppression. This would also be true for military society. The hyper-masculine and violent military culture would have undoubtedly allowed for domestic violence. Tony Henderson looks at the experiences of prostitutes in eighteenth century London using the concepts of economic and labour history.⁵³ He argues that by looking at the more mundane elements of prostitutes' lives he can create a more sympathetic narrative.⁵⁴ He sees them as the victims of circumstance and exploited by pimps and clients, but also as historical agents in many cases, able to reintegrate themselves into regular society with little difficulty.⁵⁵ He makes a good case illustrating how prostitutes lived and how they were affected by attempts to reform them. He explains that contemporary discussions and political actions presented prostitutes as victims needing to be saved or redeemed; this ultimately led to more restrictions on female sexuality with openly sexual behaviour increasingly demonized.⁵⁶ Henderson's argument can also be applied to women in military camps. While prostitution was dangerous and exploitative, women who were desperate enough could slip in to prostitution until conditions improved and then return to respectable society without too much difficulty. Katrina Honeyman looks at how industrialization impacted women in England. She argues that gendered

⁵² Margaret Hunt, "Wife Beating, Domesticity, and Women's Independence in Eighteenth-Century London," *Gender and History*, 4: 1 (March 1992), 28.

⁵³ Tony Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London: Prostitution and its Control in the Metropolis 1730-1830* (New York: Longman, 1999), 11.

⁵⁴ Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London*, 12.

⁵⁵ Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London*, 50-51.

⁵⁶ Henderson, *Disorderly Women in Eighteenth-Century London*, 198.

society held back the long-term economic, and social progress of women.⁵⁷ She shows that industrialization gave women a chance to work outside of the domestic sphere but still limited them in the kinds of employment they could obtain and men still expected them to be homemakers.

The next set of sources focuses on the social history of women and gender in eighteenth century British North America. Kathleen Brown provides a good look at the gender and racial tensions present in colonial America as well as how the enforcement of gender roles related to the desire for order in society. Brown argues that Virginia's slave society appropriated patriarchal gendered discourses to reinforce its race and class interests. She does this by exploring the meanings of the terms used to describe women in colonial Virginia, specifically the terms good wives and nasty wenches.⁵⁸ Brown's approach provides a better look at gender and the contemporary discussions surrounding it as well as the ways in which women were separated by class. In addition, she illuminates the ideals to which society expected women to aspire; explaining that women initially aspired to the status of good wives but the position of plantation mistress came into prominence as the colony developed, better reflecting the values which colonial slave society instilled in women. Much like slave society, the military used gender to reinforce its hierarchy over the men and women in military society and separate fighting men from civilian society. Mary Beth Norton argues that the divisions of gender and power at all levels of American society were an important part of colonial society and while men generally

⁵⁷ Honeyman, *Women, Gender and Industrialization in England, 1700-1870*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 2000), 147.

⁵⁸ Brown defines patriarchy as: "the historically specific authority of the father over his household, rooted in his control over labor and property, his sexual access to his wife and dependant female laborers, his control over other men's sexual access to the women of his household, and his right to punish family members and laborers." Kathleen Brown, *Good Wives, Nasty Wenches, and Anxious Patriarchs: Gender, Race, and Power in Colonial Virginia*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 4-5.

ran the public sphere, women did have a part in some elements of public life.⁵⁹ She further argues that gender relations in both formal (areas of authority) and informal (amongst neighbours) settings were well defined while within private life they remained vague, more likely to vary from one household to the next, but still did not favour women in any sense.⁶⁰ She demonstrates how society enforced gendered positions through social and legal conventions and provides a clear look at the separation of gendered roles in colonial society. Military life, by necessity, allowed women more room in the public sphere than they could expect in civilian society, but it also imposed harsh military discipline on anyone who overstepped the authority of the military hierarchy. Ruth H. Bloch argues that while gender roles and definitions can change, ideas of morality and virtue as well as ideas of right and wrong are consistently tied to them.⁶¹ She further argues that while women were still kept out of political elements of the public sphere they were able to contribute to its moral elements.⁶² In this way, she demonstrates that some women were able to break out of the private sphere by utilizing the moralist rhetoric that had been used to keep them out of the corrupting influences of public life. Women could have also used this moral rhetoric to justify their place in army camps by providing a positive moral influence for their husbands.

These sources demonstrate how historians have characterized gender in the Early Modern English-speaking world over the last 40 years. They demonstrate two different ways to examine gendered society: either as a patriarchal hierarchy; or as separate public (masculine) and domestic (feminine) spheres. Sometimes, the two models overlap in the same study. Both cases

⁵⁹ Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power in Colonial America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 24.

⁶⁰ Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers*, 24.

⁶¹ Ruth H. Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture, 1650-1800* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 17.

⁶² Bloch, *Gender and Morality in Anglo-American Culture*, 49.

have women confined mostly to home life. The patriarchal view posited a masculine hierarchy with the King at its apex that positioned women under the authority of their husbands and fathers, themselves subordinate to more senior male figures. The separate spheres view confined women to domestic life deeming them more suited to being homemakers and mothers, whereas it considered men more suited for public life and labour. As mothers focused on their families, women depended on male figures for economic support. While pushed to abide by these gendered ideals, women did not always conform. Women could not always count on male support either, due to being widowed or abandoned. Women of lower economic status often had to work outside of the home to help support their families. Army women, in particular, lived a life that blended these gendered norms. Even the most private areas of military encampments proved quite public and while the army still expected women to fulfill domestic roles, the reality of military life and the need to work and trade to survive pushed them into public life far more often. That being said, they fell under the strict patriarchal authority of military officers as well as their own husbands. In this way, military women lived a life that saw them breaking out of their expected gender roles while also keeping them under patriarchal control even stricter than in civil society.

The next set of sources focus on the history of woman camp followers, in particular army policies related to women. Barton C. Hacker studies women officially allowed to follow the European armies on strength, what was expected of them, and what the conditions were under which they lived. He argues that the operation of the army in the early modern period relied on women, but their roles changed across the armies of Europe during this time. He explains that women filled numerous supporting roles in the camp and train, working as sutlers housekeepers,

whores, nurses, laundresses, and cooks.⁶³ He also argues that entrepreneurs, including many women, provided the army with services and supplies and often blurred the lines between military and civilian life.⁶⁴ He further argues that as armies became larger they also became more directly controlled by the state and the numbers of women began to be limited as a result, although this did lead to the placement of some women camp followers as on the strength.⁶⁵ The article also describes the harsh conditions women faced using specific examples, such as a story of a woman who gave birth on the side of the road while the army marched and then caught up to her place afterward.⁶⁶ Overall, Hacker makes excellent use of numerous specific examples, including contemporary pictures and writings, to demonstrate the roles of women in western armies and how they came to diminish as armies modernized. Myna Trustram's *Women of the Regiment* focuses on the army during the Victorian era which began in 1837, but she provides an excellent look at marriage and the situations of women who married soldiers. Trustram argues that the occupation and lifestyle of soldiers and their wives were often in opposition to this ideal of family life.⁶⁷ Diane Dugaw argues that in the balladry of the time we can see an intersection between the construction of gender and the construction of heroism.⁶⁸ Dugaw demonstrates how contemporary popular culture illustrated women following the army, in particular the rare cases where women fought, but she does not express the experiences of less adventurous army women. The findings of Hacker, Trustram, and Dugaw apply equally to camp followers in North America.

⁶³ Barton C. Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe: A Reconnaissance," *Signs* 6 (4) (1981), 650.

⁶⁴ Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe," 647.

⁶⁵ Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe," 660.

⁶⁶ Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe," 662.

⁶⁷ Myna Trustram, *Women of the Regiment: Marriage and the Victorian Army* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 9.

⁶⁸ Diane Dugaw, *Warrior Women and Popular Balladry, 1650-1850*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 11.

Walter Blumenthal claimed to be the first to look at English and American camp followers during the American Revolution.⁶⁹ He argues that women who cast their lot in with British troops shared both the fortunes and the misfortunes of war, but otherwise he provides little critical insight to their experience.⁷⁰ Paul Kopperman attempts to explain why the British high command tended to have a hostile attitude towards women and soldiers' wives and also examines how that attitude affected the lives of those women. He explains that differing opinions existed among officers on whether women benefitted the army or served as a source of disruption, stating that "hostility rather than sympathy was the rule, and it heavily influenced the lives of army women."⁷¹ Kopperman argues that some officers were sympathetic of women and children in the army and were able to make use of them for mutual benefit but, for the most part, officers saw women as a problem or a necessary evil at best. John Rees calculated the numbers of women following the American army during the American Revolution while examining what conditions led to more women following a regiment at a given time. He concludes that women tended to multiply in regiments stationed in garrisons or those with geographic stability; also when the army could afford to pay and support them in exchange for providing necessary services.⁷² While the army saw women as disruptive and a clog for military movement they also provided necessary services and created a more familiar environment for soldiers, which discouraged desertion.⁷³ Overall, Rees provides a clear presentation of the roles camp followers filled in the Revolutionary-era army, their place in the military community, and the discipline they came under.

⁶⁹ Walter Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution* (New York: Arno Press, 1974), 15.

⁷⁰ Blumenthal, *Women Camp Followers of the American Revolution*, 54.

⁷¹ Paul Kopperman, "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America, 1755-1783," *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, vol. 60 (1982), 34.

⁷² John Rees, "The multitude of women" "An Examination of the Numbers of Female Camp Followers with the Continental Army." *Minerva: Quarterly Report on Women and the Military*, 14:2 (Summer 1996), 19-20.

⁷³ Rees, "The multitude of women," 21.

More recent sources shift the focus from army policy to what roles women had in the military. Holly A. Mayer, in her 1996 book *Belonging to the Army*, begins this shift by maintaining that the American army during the Revolution heavily relied on non-military support. Women's presence among camp followers helped create a military community⁷⁴ but as the need for civilian support declined so too did the number of camp followers allowed by the army.⁷⁵ Mayer demonstrates that army women were generally from the poorer elements of American society,⁷⁶ but women married to senior, and occasionally, junior officers came from an appropriately higher social standing.⁷⁷ Thus, while women were ineligible for military service they were not ineligible to provide service to the military.⁷⁸ Mayer also wrote on the Seven Years' War era. "From Forts to Families" examines women's experience in military society, arguing that women aided in the establishment of forts on colonial frontiers and facilitated the attachment of more people to the land, laying down roots for permanent settlement while facing the same great hardships as their male counterparts.⁷⁹ "Tending the Army" by Sarah Fatherly, looks at women working as nurses in the army in North America during the Seven Years' War and argues that women played an important role in the British general hospital.⁸⁰ Fatherly does a very good job of demonstrating women's place in nursing roles, though she does not cover the other roles that women with the army also filled. Peter Way argues that women were more than just war's victims and had attached themselves to the war machine for a very long time. In addition, he argues that women following the army were more than just the sexual beings they have been

⁷⁴ Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1999), 276.

⁷⁵ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 276.

⁷⁶ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 123.

⁷⁷ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 123.

⁷⁸ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 112.

⁷⁹ Holly A. Mayer. "From Forts to Families: Following the Army into Western Pennsylvania, 1758-1766," *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, 130: 1 (Jan. 2006), 6.

⁸⁰ Sarah Fatherly, "Tending the Army: Women and the British General Hospital in North America, 1754-1763," *Early American Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, 10: 3 (Fall 2012), 567.

seen as; most were not prostitutes and were important in familial and economic ways.⁸¹ He uses popular soldiers' songs to demonstrate how women were viewed by common soldiers and explains that army policy made it clear that officers saw women as a burden.⁸² Way explains that women played important social and economic roles supporting their soldier husbands, but officers saw them as a poor influence on the men and were quick to punish them if they stepped out of line.⁸³ Way makes a strong case demonstrating that women following the army could serve important roles and operate with a greater degree of agency, but they were still subjected to a strict masculine influence.

Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe by John A. Lynn looks at women's roles in the military camp, their perceived risks and rewards, and the changing of their status over time. Lynn examines a broad period of history, providing useful knowledge on the subject of camp followers in Early Modern European armies. Lynn demonstrates that women filled roles ranging from washing and sewing to labouring and carrying loads. In particular, he demonstrates their importance in helping their partners pillage and secure goods for survival. He asserts that the decline of mercenary armies and increased discipline and organization of more modern armies led to the decline in numbers of women following the army.⁸⁴ *Intrepid Women* by Thomas Cardoza attempts to expand our knowledge of *cantinières* and *vivandières* (canteen keepers or sutlers) in the French army during the Napoleonic era. He finds past attempts to look at these female contributors to the army lacking and attempts to create as "full a portrait as

⁸¹ Peter Way "Venus and Mars: Women and the British-American Army in the Seven Years' War," in *Britain and America Go to War*, ed. Julie Flavell and Stephen Conway (Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 2004), 41.

⁸² Way, "Venus and Mars," 44-45.

⁸³ Way, "Venus and Mars," 61.

⁸⁴ Lynn, *Women, Armies, and Warfare in Early Modern Europe*, 216.

possible.”⁸⁵ He shows how valued women camp followers were to the French army during this period, as well the treatment they received after they left service. The final source, *Marriage and the British Army in the Long Eighteenth Century*, by Jennine Hurl-Eamon examines the lives of military spouses and looks specifically at the wives who stayed behind in London. Hurl-Eamon argues that despite the efforts of military officials to create an unattached soldiery, soldiers and some officers saw the value of matrimony and longed for domestic life.⁸⁶ Hurl-Eamon provides a good picture of the lives of married soldiers and their wives, as well as the hardships faced by those left behind, which can provide some insight into why women may have been compelled to follow their husbands rather than stay at home.

These sources on women following the army demonstrate a historiographical shift from focusing on army policy directed at women, to focusing more on the women themselves and their roles. The earlier sources demonstrate that army policy limited the number of women following the army at this time, but also supported those who followed with the permission of officers and appreciated, if begrudgingly, the support that they provided to the army. They also demonstrate that the numbers of women allowed to follow the army depended on the attitudes of their superior officers. These officers were usually suspicious of women, seeing them more as a necessary evil than as an asset. The latter set of sources brings more attention to the roles women filled in the military, as they walked the line between civilian and military personal. They explain that women, both those with the blessing of officers and those without, created a camp community for soldiers that could discourage desertion. Their individual experiences varied but their overall social experience shared a number of things. They were able to pursue

⁸⁵ Thomas Cardoza, *Intrepid Women: Cantinieres and Vivandieres of the French Army* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 11.

⁸⁶ Jennine Hurl-Eamon, *Marriage and the British Army in the Long Eighteenth Century: “The Girl I Left Behind Me”* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 28.

economic activity and operate with a greater amount of agency than in civilian life but were still subject to the strict patriarchal authority of officers. These sources focus more on the roles filled by women than the dangers that they faced but they do explain that women faced many of the same dangers as the soldiers they supported, including the threat of disease, capture, and violent death. Overall, these sources show what a woman's place was in the army during the period of the Seven Years' War and they also give an idea of what a woman could gain by following the army.

Much of the discussion concerning women following the army in the early modern period focused either on what women did for the army or on what the army did for women. My paper will examine where these related topics overlap to provide a more holistic understanding of the female experience with the British military. We can begin to see their motivations for following the army and better understand their quality of life by looking at sources illustrating the lives of women during this period, both in the military and in civilian life. This paper focuses on how military, economic, and social factors shaped women's experiences, ranging from the work they did for the army, the fear of poverty they faced, the opposition that many military leaders had to their presence, and the misogyny of army culture they encountered. The female experience in the British army at this time was very complex, shaped by many factors, and full of uncertainty. Despite the dangers and uncertainty women faced when following the army, they could find it a preferable choice under certain circumstances.

Chapter 2: The Military Context

In order to understand the experiences of women following the British army at this time we need to examine the various factors that shaped their lives. The military exerted pervasive

control over troops and camp followers, wielding the threat of harsh discipline. The army's attitudes towards women most forcefully shaped their lives; alike determining how many women could travel with the army on the strength, their treatment, and their expected contributions. Military officers determined who to hire, those allowed to sell goods, and who would receive rations for their contributions. Employment for women proved inconsistent. Trading in illicit goods could lead to greater profits for entrepreneurial women but it came with the risk of incurring draconian discipline. Women following the army, either officially or unofficially, could face abandonment by their men or banishment from camp by officers, leaving them destitute and alone. Uncertainty characterized military life for men and women alike, but more so for the latter who often found themselves without the security of wages or food.

The army often viewed women, at best, as either a necessary evil or a hindrance to army operations; and, at worst, as unnecessary and subject to expulsion. In "Venus and Mars," Peter Way explains that women filled central social and economic roles in the military but officers saw them as a corrupting influence and kept them in check with harsh punishment if they became too far removed from their functions as caregivers and wives.⁸⁷ When the labour of women was appreciated though it could influence how officers treated women. Sarah Fatherly asserts that Braddock's appreciation for using women as nurses motivated him to allow more women than usual to follow his army.⁸⁸ Holly Mayer, writing about women in the American Revolution in her book *Belonging to the Army*, also draws attention to the differing attitudes the military held towards women. She explains that it was difficult to ban women from following the army completely and it was impossible to live without them and so they were allowed to follow as

⁸⁷ Way, "Venus and Mars," 61.

⁸⁸ Fatherly, "Tending to the Army," 567.

long as they provided support.⁸⁹ The disparity in attitudes towards women shows that even though most women undoubtedly received negative treatment, they still could find a place for themselves in the camps.

James Wolfe advised officers to judge the character and merit of women who sought to marry soldiers under their command and follow the army. In addition, he recommended that anyone who married clandestinely without approval should suffer harsh punishment. Ultimately, Wolfe argued that marriage for soldiers should be discouraged because he believed the service suffered under the multitude of women already with the regiment.⁹⁰ Braddock also mentioned that more women had come over from Ireland than was needed to fill roles such as washing laundry and he planned to utilize this surplus by having the women work with the hospital for six pence and provisions. He threatened to turn who refused to work out of camp and, in this way, rejected the women's demands for higher wages.⁹¹ An account by Massachusetts provincial Sergeant David Holden provides some insight into the differing attitudes towards women of both the army and soldiers. He describes an incident where the regulars had a dispute over who had the best right to a woman and who would have her first. He emphasises the discord and hubbub the dispute caused and how it roused the whole camp but shows very little concern for the woman involved.⁹² His account demonstrates both how many soldiers fought over women as objects and how consequently many military men viewed women as a source of trouble and discord amongst

⁸⁹ Mayer, *Belonging to the Army*, 151.

⁹⁰ James Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers: Also His Orders for a Battalion and an Army* (London, 1768), 28.

⁹¹ Edward Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books February 26 to June 17, 1755* (Cumberland, MD: Will H. Lowdermilk, 1878), 17.

⁹² David Holden, *The Journal Kept by Sergeant David Holden of Groton Mass. During the Latter Part of the French and Indian War. February 20 – November 29, 1760*, ed. Samuel A. Green (Cambridge: John Wilson & Son, 1889), 23.

the men. The army viewed women, in short, as a source of problems difficult to limit. At the same time, women provided a valuable source of auxiliary labour when controlled.

The army had relatively strict policies on soldiers marrying and the number of women allowed to follow the army, though officers could make exceptions depending on their views and circumstances. Kopperman argues that while some officers took good care of the women and children under them, hostility proved more common than sympathy.⁹³ Women who followed the army were usually the wives or relatives of soldiers or officers, and their social status heavily influenced the treatment they received. The wives of officers, few of whom chose to follow their husbands, were considered ladies, could have servants, and were treated quite well, though they were not exempted from the harsh realities of life on the march.⁹⁴ The commanding officer determined the number of women allowed to follow the regiment officially. First, this led to the forced desertion of women in Britain by their soldier partners when the army sailed for America. Lieutenant John Knox writes that when the 43rd regiment embarked from Cork in 1756 most of the soldiers' wives were not permitted to follow their husbands so a considerable sum of money was raised from the gentlemen and merchants of the city so that the women could afford to return to their homes of origin rather than have them and their children be left alone and destitute.⁹⁵ Second, the same could occur again in the colonies when the army went on campaign. Edward Braddock allowed six women per company of regulars (nominally 100 men but normally about 70), four to the carpenters, five to the rangers, light horse, and artillery. He would not supply provisions for more than this number, in accordance with military policy at the

⁹³ Paul Kopperman, "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America," 34.

⁹⁴ Charlotte Brown, "The Journal of Charlotte Brown, Matron of the General Hospital with the English Forces in America, 1754-1756" in *Colonial Captives, Marches and Journeys*, ed. Isabel M. Calder, (Port Washington: The Macmillan Company, 1935), 179.

⁹⁵ John Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 2, 4 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1916), 4.

time.⁹⁶ Braddock's orderly books demonstrate that women permitted to follow benefitted from provisions while all other followers would have to make their own way. Despite the uncertain and difficult conditions there was almost always more women than permitted, leading army officers often to complain of the problems caused by their numbers.

Overall, the army kept the numbers of women quite low, though the numbers of unofficial followers could exceed that of official followers. Although discouraged from doing so, soldiers still married. Sergeant David Holden met the woman who would become his wife while drilling his squad in Groton for the 1760 campaign. After the war Holden and his wife returned to Groton where they had most of their children.⁹⁷ Generally, more women attended the army when not campaigning, affording soldiers' families more stability, but once the army began to move then the fates of the women became more uncertain, not all being permitted to follow. Likely, there were many stories like that of the Holdens who met while the army was stationary and preparing for a campaign and were only able to settle properly after the conflict had ended. This in turn provides some insight into why women may have followed the army despite the harsh conditions. They may have become attached to a soldier when times were good but once these conditions changed they had little choice but to follow the army (if permitted) or be left behind alone. Wolfe recommended that officers do what they could to discourage matrimony among the troops because he believed that having too many women with the regiment would be inconvenient and stated that many women are not industrious enough to support their husbands

⁹⁶ Edward Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 37

⁹⁷ David Holden, *The Journal Kept by Sergeant David Holden*, 3.

as they should. Wolfe also advised officers to enquire into the character of any woman who married a soldier and to punish any couple who married clandestinely.⁹⁸

The army controlled nearly every aspect of their lives. Women under military authority had to do as ordered or face harsh punishment, especially true in times of greater hardship and conflict. Kopperman explains that during times of crisis women had to accept more work. During the siege of Quebec, for example, women were ordered to remain in the barracks and cook for and attend all of the men at work.⁹⁹ Officers determined who could follow the army, what activities were allowed, who could work and what work was required, and what could be sold and who could sell it. Kopperman explains that women would try to supplement their earnings by selling food, liquor, and merchandise to the troops, sometimes against orders.¹⁰⁰ Officers also determined what transgressions would be punished, applying to all those under its authority, not just soldiers. Military punishments could also cruelly and forcefully part couples. Private Luke Gridley provides an account from June 12th, 1757 near Fort Edward, of Mary Rogers who was drummed out of camp and a George Webster, presumably her partner, who was put under guard to prevent him from following her.¹⁰¹ This account demonstrates how a woman being drummed out of camp could influence a soldier and the precautions that military officers had to take when dealing with women they deemed problematic.

Women on the strength received provisions, though often less than what men received. Captain John Knox states that in February of 1760 the garrison at Quebec victualled women on the strength at four full rations for six women.¹⁰² Despite this, no single policy on the rationing

⁹⁸ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 30.

⁹⁹ Paul Kopperman, "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America," 15.

¹⁰⁰ Paul Kopperman, "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America," 15.

¹⁰¹ Luke Gridley, *Luke Gridley's Diary of 1757* (Hartford, Connecticut: Hartford Press, 1907), 35.

¹⁰² John Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 2, 264.

of women existed, meaning the practice varied from unit to unit, as well as by time and place depending on changing conditions. At times, officers sympathized with women following the army and ensured they were provided for, even when sent away out of necessity. David Holden's account mentions that each regiment would provide four women per regiment with provisions or four pence in lieu of thereof.¹⁰³ Overall, the rationing of women could vary greatly both in the number of women and the amount or condition of provisions provided to them. This unpredictability could cause women's situations to change dramatically in a short period of time. This also meant that the experiences of different women could vary a great deal; where one woman may have been able to prepare for lean periods, others could face starvation or generally poorer conditions.

The army's main source of support for women came in the form of employment. Although officers considered the army to be a male sphere, women could find a place within the army by filling roles generally associated with femininity, thus conforming to gender standards while participating in the man's world. Officers viewed the lower-class wives of regular soldiers with suspicion, but usually gave them work to do as nurses, or as cooks, laundresses, and sutlers.¹⁰⁴ Working for the army for a wage, though beneficial economically, was often compulsory and could be hazardous. Fatherly explains that working as a nurse in the military hospital was often physically demanding, repetitive, and unpleasant but women who refused to do this duty could face punishment and even be turned out of camp.¹⁰⁵ In addition to having some economic opportunity, the army often provided rations to soldiers' wives with official status. The amount given could vary depending on the availability of supplies. Provisioning arrangements were also

¹⁰³ David Holden, *The Journal Kept by Sergeant David Holden*, 11.

¹⁰⁴ Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 18.

¹⁰⁵ Fatherly, "Tending to the Army," 575.

subject to changes in orders and regulations. Knox mentions an order given in November of 1759, at Point Levi near Quebec, limiting women to two thirds their normal allowance and only for those attending the hospital or washing for the officers. In addition, they could no longer sell goods unless they resided in the men's quarters.¹⁰⁶ Women could also find themselves ordered to report to the hospital matron to work as nurses or else be struck off the allowance.¹⁰⁷ Any woman who did not follow such orders and make themselves useful ran the risk of losing their source of provisions and income. On Braddock's campaign, some of the women initially protested working for low wages because they could make more for the same work elsewhere. The general quickly quelled this attempted protest though, by threatening to turn them out of camp and replace them with other women grateful for the pay and rations.¹⁰⁸ The army expected women to fill roles doing work traditionally seen as domestic in nature. Although unpredictable, women could profit from any available employment. As a result, women provided valuable auxiliary labour for the army, and they did so subject to the same discipline as soldiers.

Military discipline pervaded every aspect of camp life and orders from above determined what activities women could participate in and what punishments they faced if they did not do as ordered. Way describes the brutality of British military discipline. "Military justice proved even bloodier, waging a war of terror against its own men, maiming and killing many to coerce all to do their duty." Way further explains that "the army adroitly exploited nationalistic, religious, gender, and racial rhetoric to secure their hearts and minds to the conflict."¹⁰⁹ Way provides a clear picture of how the British military used violence and rhetoric to control the people under its

¹⁰⁶ John Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 2, 202.

¹⁰⁷ William Hervey, *Journals of the Hon. William Hervey in North America and Europe From 1755 to 1814; with order books at Montreal, 1760-1763* (Buttermarket, UK: Paul & Mathew, 1906), 66.

¹⁰⁸ Fatherly, "Tending to the Army," 575.

¹⁰⁹ Peter Way, "Militarizing the Atlantic World: Army Discipline, Coerced Labor, and Britain's Commercial Empire," *Atlantic Studies: Global Currents*, 13:3 (2016), 347.

command. While soldiers comprised the primary focus of this rhetoric and discipline, it also ordered the lives of women in the camps. Wolfe recommended that no soldier's wife should be allowed to sell goods or liquor without the permission of their major, under pain of imprisonment.¹¹⁰ William Hervey recorded general orders on July 21st, 1761 at Montreal, stipulating that a soldier caught selling strong liquors to soldiers would be severely punished, but a women caught doing the same faced punishment and drumming out of camp.¹¹¹ The army did not exempt women from the pain and humiliation of public corporal punishment. Knox writes in November of 1759 of two women whipped through Quebec for selling spirits contrary to orders.¹¹²

Conditions for men and women could vary, but all were at the mercy of military discipline when they disobeyed orders or committed crimes, although punishments given to women were less brutal than for men or remitted in favour of banishment. The courts martial that enforced military discipline differed from civil courts in many ways that disadvantaged the defendant. The officers who made up a court filled the roles of judge, jury, and prosecution with only death sentences subject to royal review.¹¹³ The scale of punishment proved harsher than in civil society.¹¹⁴ Punishment was not only physically brutal, but also humiliating and often psychologically scarring. In addition, the army often made comrades of the accused carry out the sentence adding a cruel personal element to the punishment and ensuring a steep price for stepping out of line.¹¹⁵ The military exercised strict control over the lives of everyone who lived under its authority and the discipline imposed tended to be brutal. Women who followed the

¹¹⁰ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 19.

¹¹¹ Hervey, *Journals of the Hon. William Hervey*, 150.

¹¹² John Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 2, 218.

¹¹³ Way, "Militarizing the Atlantic World," 349.

¹¹⁴ Way, "Militarizing the Atlantic World," 351.

¹¹⁵ Way, "Militarizing the Atlantic World," 351.

army, much like their male counterparts, had to live under its threatening shadow, though rarely suffered the full might of military punishment.

Women faced suspicion and uncertainty from the army. Their position could worsen or improve depending on their commanding officer. Knox mentions that Brigadier General William Haviland, though he had ordered the limit on the number of women, also always extended his humanity to the poor women who were no longer permitted to follow their husbands and ensure they had subsistence granted to them.¹¹⁶ Though most officers saw women more as a problem to deal with, some still acted paternally towards them at times. In this way military attitudes could vary to a degree, allowing women more freedom of security, but cold discipline reigned over all.

Chapter 3: The Military Labour Market for Women

Most women performed labour the army deemed women's work at the time: nursing, laundressing, and cooking. Of these roles, nursing had the most visible impact on military functions. Nursing for the army often proved unpleasant and came with a number of risks, given the prevalence of disease in military camps. Nonetheless, nursing offered women a way to earn wages and rations, the importance of which the army could not but recognize, if only begrudgingly. The army recruited nurses in North America rather haphazardly, from soldiers' wives. A woman with no background in nursing could learn necessary skills on the job, but the practice of rotating out nurses after a fortnight hindered this training. Rotation likely arose because the soldiers' wives themselves disliked having to work as nurses since it kept them away

¹¹⁶ Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 2, 395.

from their husbands and children while exposing them to the dangers of illness and disease.¹¹⁷ The nurse matron Charlotte Brown lost her brother to disease and also herself fell ill afterward, likely as a result of being exposed to an easily transmittable illness in the camp.¹¹⁸ Makeshift conditions and the lack of proper medical facilities made hospital work even more difficult. Fatherly describes army nursing as: “physically demanding, repetitive, and often unpleasant; there were endless amounts of torn bed linens to mend, soiled ones to launder, bedpans and urinals to dump, and patients to wrangle into taking their medicines and eating their prescribed diets.”¹¹⁹ Despite the dangers and reservations of many among them, women proved especially valuable to the military for their work as nurses.

Laundressing, cleaning, and cooking, other common forms of female labour, also provided women means to earn money.¹²⁰ Mayer, like Kopperman, asserts that though nurses worked as part of military units, they most commonly laboured as laundresses for the hospital.¹²¹ While not as directly important to the military as nursing, this kind of work, by enhancing cleanliness, contributed to the health of the camps. Women also consistently found employment in preparing food and mending clothes.¹²² While generally given to women, men could perform these jobs if necessary.¹²³ This meant that if the commanding officer deemed it necessary, then he could leave women behind entirely, costing them their source of income. By working for the army as laundresses, cooks, and servants, women contributed to military operations, freeing up men to

¹¹⁷ Paul, E. Kopperman, “Medical Services in the British Army, 1742-1783,” *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Science*, 34 (1979), 439.

¹¹⁸ Charlotte Brown, “The Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 184.

¹¹⁹ Fatherly, “Tending to the Army,” 575.

¹²⁰ Kopperman, “The British High Command and Soldiers’ Wives in America,” 15.

¹²¹ Mayer. “From Forts to Families,” 42.

¹²² Fatherly, Tending to the Army, 575.

¹²³ Anderson, *A People’s Army*, 97.

focus on other tasks. This work, in addition to nursing, allowed women to earn some subsistence and secure a place in military life.

Women following the army gained opportunities to earn an income which may not have been available to them in Britain or the colonies as nurses, servants, and laundresses.¹²⁴ These jobs in particular directly allowed women to aid the war effort, earn income for themselves, and help support their families.¹²⁵ Military officials controlled the labour market according to the dictates of the military campaign. The amount paid to women could vary depending on the commanding officers and the supplies available. On the whole, according to Kopperman, “nurses received six pence per day for their services, while laundresses were paid a shilling, cooks one shilling eight pence and matrons two shillings or two shillings six pence.”¹²⁶ That being said, this was less than women could earn doing similar work elsewhere. In addition, they experienced quite poor conditions, while the work proved physically demanding and often unpleasant.¹²⁷ But the women could not demand more due to the conditions of the military market. Overall, women provided the army with a cheap and easily exploited source of labour. Additionally, women were able to fill roles that traditionally fell to women in civilian life, freeing up man power for more masculine tasks.

Army life often faced unpredictable changes that could result in pay being delayed or lessened, however. Way explains that soldiers often did not have sufficient food, shelter, or pay.¹²⁸ And if the men suffered such shortages then women certainly did as well. Soldiers could

¹²⁴ Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 18.

¹²⁵ Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 17.

¹²⁶ Kopperman, “Medical Services in the British Army,” 436.

¹²⁷ Fatherly, *Tending to the Army*, 575. Braddock supplied women and paid six pence a day for their work as nurses. *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 17.

¹²⁸ Way, “Militarizing the Atlantic World,” 358.

also experience unexpected stoppages of pay.¹²⁹ These stoppages were taken from the soldier's gross pay to provide necessary supplies and equipment, but market fluctuations and unfair conversion rates as well as additional wear and tear on the soldier's equipment could cause an unexpected increase to the sum taken from the soldier's wages.¹³⁰ In addition, fines soldiers were forced to pay for disciplinary and dress infractions might further reduce their income.¹³¹ Thus a soldier's income could experience fluctuations that made it unreliable as a steady source. But where the military insulated soldiers from the worst of these fluctuations, women experienced greater uncertainty as to their subsistence. As commanding officers had control over hiring and the labour practices of the military, they decided the work available, those employed, and the compensation, if they gave any at all. As gender conventions portrayed women as non-wage earners, they faced more discrimination in the allocation of paid employment, aided only in the presumed femininity of certain domestic tasks. Women also could be left behind when conditions became too hazardous or their presence inconvenient, as demonstrated near the end of Braddock's campaign when he reduced the number of women to two per regiment and declared that any other women caught following risked execution.¹³² To cope with the inconsistent nature of military employment, women adopted various subsistence strategies in an effort to remain with the army.

Women did a number of things in their quest for solvency that their military superiors attempted to discourage, such as selling alcohol to soldiers without permission. It is also likely that women could have been desperate enough to steal at times despite the harsh penalties they faced if caught. General Braddock, while encamped at Fort Cumberland on the way to Fort

¹²⁹ Brumwell, *The British Soldier and War in the Americas*, 57.

¹³⁰ Way, "Class and the Common Soldier," 468.

¹³¹ Way, "Class and the Common Soldier," 468.

¹³² Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 50.

Duquesne, ordered that: “Any soldier, sutler, woman or other person whatever who shall be detected in stealing, purloining or wasting of any provisions shall suffer Death.”¹³³ The number of times orders against the sale had to be repeated indicates that women continued to sell alcohol without permission and considering the risks involved in disobeying orders, likely made a decent profit.¹³⁴ Women also bought and sold stolen goods in some instances. Orders frequently warned women against handling stolen goods.¹³⁵ That being said not all women, or others for that matter, who committed a crime were aware of it at the time. Mrs Profhett, Jane Nurray, Catherine Inwood, Catherine Lawless, and Elizabeth Tinsley, all of the 4th Battalion of Royal Americans, were found guilty of buying stolen goods from a soldier named Thomas Anderson. Anderson was sentenced to death but the women were acquitted of knowing that the goods were stolen and spared.¹³⁶ After this incident orders made it clear that purchased goods from a soldier without the permission of their commanding officer would be held accountable. In addition, anyone who handled stolen goods, even unknowingly, faced the prospect of corporal punishment and being drummed out, with the thief facing execution.¹³⁷ This shows us that some women in the camps attempted to make a profit by violating orders and dealing with illicit goods but also took a great risk in doing so. In addition it demonstrates the level of control that the military had over economic conditions and how women courted punishment when acting against orders.

Historians have written little about unemployment but, by looking at the numbers of women with the army and taking into account the fluctuations in the army’s need for women labourers and nurses, we can assume that many women regularly experienced either unemployment or underemployment while following the army. Women not otherwise employed spent their time

¹³³ Braddock, *Braddock’s Orderly Books*, 46.

¹³⁴ Braddock, *Braddock’s Orderly Books*, 18.

¹³⁵ Braddock, *Braddock’s Orderly Books*, 46.

¹³⁶ Hervey, *Journals of the Hon. William Hervey*, 167.

¹³⁷ Hervey, *Journals of the Hon. William Hervey*. 167.

helping their husbands or caring for their families. The number of women with the army often exceeded the permitted limit, usually 6 for every 100 men, especially when the army went into winter quarters or camped near a population centre.¹³⁸ The number of women with the army could fluctuate depending on the army's proximity to population centres and based on the amount of opportunity available to camp followers. Camp followers, both male and female, blurred the lines between civilian and military and could pass into both worlds with relative ease. Women without military work would need to secure provisions through either the support of their partners, charity, or illicit means. If times became too desperate it appears that they returned to civilian society.

Women could make money for themselves by selling various goods that they procured, ranging from local food to alcohol. Women working as sutlers usually required the permission of the commanding officer if they desired to do so. Lt. Gordon's account of the siege of Louisbourg mentions that General Amherst made all commanding officers responsible for sutlers under them and required that all sutlers obtain permission before they could sell goods of any kind to the men.¹³⁹ While not always the case, the military could deny or take away permission from sutlers at any time depending on the circumstances. Those caught sutling without permission could face harsh consequence. Samuel Cobb notes that a private and a corporal that conspired to forge orders to sutle received 30 and 65 lashes respectively.¹⁴⁰ That being said, the army could also encourage sutling. Even though sutling required permission in Gordon's account, the general also encouraged a market for provisions, beer, and other necessities.¹⁴¹

Barton Hacker explains that the roles of sutlers and women often overlapped, with a very fine

¹³⁸ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 19; Paul Kopperman, "The British High Command and Soldiers' Wives in America," 19.

¹³⁹ W. A. Gordon, *Journal of the Siege of Louisbourg* (Royal United Services Institution, 1915), 126.

¹⁴⁰ Samuel Cobb, "The Journal of Samuel Cobb," *The Bulletin of the Fort Ticonderoga Museum*, 29.

¹⁴¹ Gordon, *Journal of the Siege of Louisbourg*, 126.

line separating the sutler as entrepreneur and the sutler as army wife seeking to supplement her husband's income.¹⁴² Sutling could be very lucrative, even if not a full-time occupation.

Women likely functioned as sutlers when they had access to goods of value and in this way, they would have supplemented their own incomes and brought more goods and commerce into camp life.

The army offered a degree of opportunity to female camp followers from the labouring class, the majority of them wives or partners to soldiers or army auxiliaries, men not paid a substantial amount.¹⁴³ By working for the army they could supplement their husbands' income and better support themselves. Arthur Doughty, writing of the siege of Quebec, mentions that industrious women could afford to pay for provisions daily in order to get by. This demonstrates that even when not supplied directly by the army, the money women made from their work could be enough to support themselves. Doughty also mentions that the idle could not support themselves, indicating that women who did not secure work for themselves could find themselves in a difficult position, unable to gain necessities.¹⁴⁴ In this way he also demonstrates that the blame for unemployment was placed upon the women. By working for the army, some ensured they had food and the necessities they needed to survive. If women had the initial capital they could make money for themselves by selling goods to soldiers, though officers could ban or limit the sale of certain goods. Most women did not sutle but those who had the opportunity to do so could gain a degree of economic freedom.

Chapter 4: The Social Life of Army Women

¹⁴² Hacker, "Women and Military Institutions in Early Modern Europe," 650.

¹⁴³ John Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, Vol. 2, 202.

¹⁴⁴ A. Doughty, *The Seige of Quebec and the Battle of the Plains of Abraham* (Quebec, 1901), 77.

The army's need for women but desire to restrict their numbers was matched by soldiers' desire for but frustration of female companionship. Military songs provide us some insight into how soldiers felt about women and marriage. In particular, "The Camp Melody" demonstrates that soldiers desired to be with women but also warned against love and marriage. One verse avowed that married men sleep on a bed of thorns and are always worried and ragged while single men are free and do not need to worry since they do not have a wife who can whimper and pout when they leave to fight.¹⁴⁵ A different song shows an opposing attitude towards marriage existed in the army. "Tom and Kate, Or The Soldiers Farewell" provides a dialogue between a soldier and his wife that demonstrates the ways she supports him and encourages him. Even though he is reluctant to leave her, her love gives him courage and she promises that as his wife she will keep his canteen full and his linen clean. In addition, "The Soldier's Farewell" demonstrates some of the duties that a soldier's wife fulfilled.¹⁴⁶ These songs sketch the competing views of marriage which existed within the British military, with many seeing it as detrimental to a soldier's ability to focus on discipline and fighting while others saw it as a way to bolster a soldier and give him a personal reason to fight. While practical and material reasons obtained for women to follow the army most followed out of love. Strong bonds between a soldier and his wife, and a desire for each to support the other through hardship, could provide a strong motivation for women to follow the army in this period.

Marriage to a soldier served as a primary motivator for women to follow the army despite it being such a harsh life. Formal marriage was preferred socially but it also required greater ceremony and its bonds were legally more difficult to break. Common law marriage was more common among lower class men and women, including soldiers and their wives, as it was easier

¹⁴⁵ James Rivington, *Songs, Naval and Military* (New York: Rivington, 1779), 43.

¹⁴⁶ Rivington, *Songs, Naval and Military*, 52

to enter into than traditional marriage. That being said, common law marriage did not provide women with the same protections and stake in their husband's goods and property as traditional marriage.¹⁴⁷ Common law marriage also gave a less moral appearance, especially to officers, but the relationship was generally still seen as sacrosanct by the men and women involved. The arrangement came with many of the same obligations as traditional marriage and signified the commitment couples felt for one another. The increased proximity to their husbands and a chance to increase their income could provide a positive experience for women who followed the army. They faced many hardships but they often did not have to face them alone. They could keep their families together while raising their children.¹⁴⁸ The military offered opportunities for the children of soldiers, such as working as drummer boys, which may not have been possible if the couple had stayed home. The greatest benefit that women could gain from following the army was the ability to keep their families together near their means of income, allowing them to have a degree of stability and control in their lives. They could also keep an eye on their husband's behaviour and lessen the possibility of abandonment. It also meant that if their husband died from battle or disease they would know right away and they would know the circumstances of their husband's death. In short, following the army meant that women could have children with their husbands without worrying about fidelity and also be able to support each other as a family unit.

Women with the military were able to move within the camps with a great deal of autonomy. They could work for the military or offer their services privately as laundresses or cooks. In addition, they were able to interact more freely with the opposite sex without being conspicuous. In fact, interacting with men would have been unavoidable. This in turn gave them greater

¹⁴⁷ Hill, *Women, Work, and Sexual Politics*, 206.

¹⁴⁸ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 23.

opportunities to exercise a degree of sexual freedom not afforded elsewhere. While they did have greater freedoms in this way, military attempts to suppress such behaviour also could limit women's freedom to move and act as they desired. In addition, they were under constant scrutiny from military officers and had no choice but to submit to medical examinations when ordered. Overall, the greater sexual freedom that women gained in the camps came at the cost of greater suspicion and harsher reprisals from the upper classes of military society.

Historians have written little about promiscuous sex in military environments, other than to point to the prostitute as a stereotypical female camp follower and document the army's attempts to discourage the trade. That being said, both the attempts to suppress promiscuous sex and the heavily skewed gender ratios in military camps clearly suggest that promiscuous and extramarital sex commonly occurred. The military environment, at the same time, provided much incentive for sexual relations to occur outside the bounds of matrimony. As long as a couple was discreet the army would less likely judge them for sexual transgressions. In particular, living together out of wedlock won more acceptance in the camp community as many soldiers practiced it.¹⁴⁹ That being said, the army still sought to control promiscuous sexuality and curb prostitution, as well as the disease they could spread. Braddock subjected women on his expedition to medical inspections.¹⁵⁰ Thus, while the camps had more opportunities for anonymity and sexual freedom, the efforts to curb this could also be quite severe. Due to the dramatically uneven numbers of men and women in army camps some women likely partook in promiscuous sex. They had the opportunity and the incentive to do so, possibly even conniving to have more than

¹⁴⁹ Samuel Jenks, *Diary of Captain Samuel Jenks During the French and Indian War 1760* (Cambridge: John Wilson and Son, 1890), 15.

¹⁵⁰ Brumwell, *The British Soldier and War in the Americas*, 122.

one man to support them. At the very least, the fact that military authorities took actions to try and prevent the spread of sexual diseases indicates that a level of promiscuous sex was going on.

Women practiced prostitution, a profession society pretended to abhor while tolerating, to earn a living. Likewise, the army discouraged commercial sex but, as in civilian society, the trade resisted its suppression. Prostitution provided men with a sexual outlet and an escape from marital intimacy but also contradicted prevailing ideas regarding women's domesticity.¹⁵¹ While few direct mentions of prostitution appear in military records, there are clear indications that commercial sex occurred. Luke Gridley's journal provides a possible example from June 12th, 1757 near Fort Edward. He describes a Mary Rogers being drumming out of camp and the editor of the journal mentions that shortly after the incident a medical examination took place of all the camp women who "seem to have been of some number."¹⁵² Likely a check for venereal disease, this incident suggests that at least sexual promiscuity and perhaps prostitution occurred in the camp. Braddock's orderly book also mentions this practice of having doctors check to insure only "clean and proper" women followed the army.¹⁵³ These comments demonstrate a suspicion of women being prostitutes and their characterization as spreaders of disease. They also show the extent of the army's control over women, where it could order them to submit to a doctor's inspection. Obviously, not all women were prostitutes, though some undoubtedly served in this capacity considering the disparity between the numbers of men and women in the camps.

Henderson explains that women generally turned to prostitution out of economic need and few

¹⁵¹ Randolph Trumbach, *Sex, Gender and Sexual Identity in Modern Culture: Male Sodomy and Female Prostitution in Enlightenment England*, in John C. Fout, ed., *Forbidden History: The State, Society and the Regulation of Sexuality in Modern Europe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 89-106, 203.

¹⁵² Luke Gridley, *Luke Gridley's Diary of 1757*, 35.

¹⁵³ "The Journal of a British Officer Halkett's Orderly Books," in Charles Hamilton, *Braddock's Defeat* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1959), 15.

stayed in the trade for long.¹⁵⁴ He also asserts that women slipped into prostitution relatively easily in hard times, then left the trade without too much difficulty when their lives become more stable.¹⁵⁵ While the records do not allow us to gauge the prevalence of prostitution among camp following women, it certainly occurred. Though neither a safe nor ideal occupation, the large number of unattached men who could provide a woman with the income needed to get through times of economic hardship made prostitution a fixture in the camps.

Women also partook in the drinking and celebrating that went on in the camps. One rather unhappy story relayed by Nathaniel Knap on May 5th, 1759 near Portsmouth, New Hampshire describes a man and a woman who drank so much one evening that they went to sleep and never woke again.¹⁵⁶ The preface of Luke Gridley's diary takes note that it was a constant struggle for the officers to keep the vices of those in the camp in check. They drove out the worst of the camp trulls and limited or stopped the drinking of alcohol in his camp.¹⁵⁷ This demonstrates that despite the best efforts of the officers many of the inhabitants of the army camps did indulge in various vices when they had the opportunity. His mention of camp trulls also demonstrates that officers believed there were less reputable women present in the camps taking part in more immoral activities with the soldiers.

Women provided army life with domestic and social spheres.¹⁵⁸ By offering soldiers the opportunity to have sexual relations and marry, as well as tending to their families and children women created a domestic life within the confines of military authority. This in turn would shape the social atmosphere of the camps. Women also enhanced the social scene through their

¹⁵⁴ Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, 50-51.

¹⁵⁵ Henderson, *Disorderly Women*, 50-51.

¹⁵⁶ Nathaniel Knap, *The Diary of Nathaniel Knap of Newbury* (Boston: The Society of Colonia Wars in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 1895), 34.

¹⁵⁷ Luke Gridley, *Luke Gridley's Diary of 1757*, (Hartford, CT: Hartford Press, 1907), 20.

¹⁵⁸ Mayer. "From Forts to Families," 6.

economic actions. By participating in the selling of alcohol and other goods they contributed to the social activity of soldiers and other camp followers.¹⁵⁹ While historians have written little about the social lives of army women, they would have socialized with each other in ways similar to civilian life. They worked alongside each other doing household chores as well as any work their commanding officers had assigned. Due to the skewed gender ratios, they would likely also become friends with a greater proportion of men, or at the very least be more likely to find themselves socializing with a greater number of men: drinking, talking, and singing songs. Through their economic, domestic, and social activities women influenced the very existence of military camps.

Chapter 5: Threats to Army Women

The scattered records on the social life of the camps also reveal a degree of sexual conflict. Soldiers shared the patriarchal views prominent in British society during this time. Many believed overly emotional women more trouble than they were worth and in need of strict control. Captain Samuel Jenks told of one woman fighting with her sweetheart on the 24th of July 1760 near Ticonderoga, who held her underwater until she almost drowned to “cool her courage.” Jenks approved of his actions and further remarked that he wished that all such women suffered this fate.¹⁶⁰ Jenks’s comments illustrate the opinions of an army officer. He demonstrates that officers in the army did not think highly of women, especially if these women did not appear to be earning their keep. In addition, his account shows the army’s tacit acceptance of using violence against women, a reality at the time in society, but which the hyper masculine and violent nature of military life exacerbated.

¹⁵⁹ Way, “Venus and Mars,” 41.

¹⁶⁰ Samuel Jenks, *Diary of Captain Samuel Jenks During the French and Indian War 1760*, 15

In his advice for young officers Wolfe stipulates that soldiers who violently accost non-combatants, especially women, deserve death, though such a stance typically intended more to win locals' hearts and minds than protecting women.¹⁶¹ Orders repeatedly mandated that even when raiding the countryside soldiers could not molest women and children in any way.¹⁶² The fact that this needed repeating demonstrates that soldiers broke these orders. Again, these kinds of orders meant to avoid infuriating the local populace. While they do indicate that soldiers presented a danger to women they do not demonstrate that the same protections were afforded to women travelling with the army, whom soldiers were not above harming. David Holden mentions an occasion on October 4th, 1760, at Crown Point, where there occurred a "mighty discord amongst the regulars this night disputing who had the best right to a woman & who should have the first go at her even till it came to bloos, & their hubbub raised all most the whole camp."¹⁶³ Given the gender demography, soldiers could subject women to their whims and sexual desires. The incident also demonstrates why officers could see women as a source of disorder among the men.

Another threat to women came from the camp itself. Disease haunted army life. The close quarters, unsanitary conditions, frequent travel and contact with different people, and often poor nutrition all contributed to making army camps a breeding ground for disease. Disease often caused a great deal of issues for the army, sickening soldiers and camp followers, causing more casualties than combat. The prevalence of disease in army life, of course, put women at risk as well. Fatherly mentions that Braddock struggled to get women to turn up for hospital duty in the

¹⁶¹ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 79.

¹⁶² Knox, *The Journal of Captain John Knox*, vol. 1, 348.

¹⁶³ Holden, *The Journal Kept by Sergeant David Holden*, 23.

face of an epidemic as they did not want to contract the illness in the army hospital.¹⁶⁴ Women following the army could also lose their loved ones, by the diseases sweeping through camps. Charlotte Brown, the Nurse Matron travelling with the army in 1755, lost her beloved brother to sickness before falling ill herself.¹⁶⁵ Brown wrote in her diary how devastating disease could be and how she felt after losing her brother to sickness. “July the 17: oh! How shall I express my distraction this unhappy day at 2 in the afternoon deprived me of my dear brother in whom I have lost my kind guardian and protector and am now left a friendless exile from all that is dear to me.”¹⁶⁶ Brown’s account demonstrates how quickly someone’s health could deteriorate and how little could be done for them. Disease posed a constant albeit unpredictable threat which the average person had little control over but army life exhibited a greater pathology putting all camp residents at higher risk.

Women living with the army in a time of war exposed themselves to the same threats as their men, particularly given the irregular warfare carried on by Native Americans and Euro-Americans alike, which did not also discriminate between soldiers and non-combatants. Stanley Pargellis provides a letter written by Harry Gordon. Gordon, a royal engineer who served under the Duke of Cumberland and Braddock, describes the events of the 9th of July 1755, when the army column was attacked on route to Fort Duquesne. His account describes women suffering wounds or death alongside soldiers in the ambush.¹⁶⁷ Lieutenant W.A. Gordon, during the siege of Louisbourg on June 8th, 1758, describes the Native allies of the French as brutes who commonly scalped women and other defenceless people.¹⁶⁸ He demonstrates clearly that women

¹⁶⁴ Fatherly, “Tending to the Army,” 575.

¹⁶⁵ Brown, “Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 184.

¹⁶⁶ Brown, “Journal of Charlotte Brown,” 184.

¹⁶⁷ Stanley Pargellis, *Military Affairs in North America 1748-1765* (New York, The American Historical Association, 1936), 108.

¹⁶⁸ W. A. Gordon, *Journal of the Siege of Louisbourg*, (London: Royal United Services Institution, 1915), 125.

were in no way safe from enemy attacks. Finally the threat of attack could lead to commanding officers forcing women out of the camp for their own safety and the safety of the army column.¹⁶⁹ Military commanders could leave women behind when danger was imminent in order to protect them and in order to allow for faster movement for the column, but which could also leave them unprotected from enemy attack behind the lines.¹⁷⁰ In addition, while women rarely engaged in combat, they could still find themselves in proximity to battles and caught up in the violence. For example, General Jeffery Amherst mentioned in his journal on June 27th near Louisbourg, that two men suffered mortal wounds and a woman was killed during an exchange of cannon fire.¹⁷¹ While women were not direct combatants they were present in army life and faced the same dangers as the men with whom they travelled.

Conclusion

Life with the army often proved dangerous and uncertain. Women faced disease, starvation, rape, abandonment, and violent death. Disease could ravage their health or take their men from them. The danger of enemy attack also frequently threatened and, though women did not fight, they often still became casualties of combat. They could be captured and ransomed, scalped and left for dead, or simply killed by stray shots. In many ways, they faced all of the hardships of the soldiers they lived alongside with the added burdens that came from being women. Despite this they continued to follow the army.

Women also had to contend with the treatment they faced from their allies, not just enemies. Officers could treat women cruelly with harsh discipline for even small acts of disobedience or

¹⁶⁹ Braddock, *Braddock's Orderly Books*, 58.

¹⁷⁰ Wolfe, *General Wolfe's Instructions to Young Officers*, 70.

¹⁷¹ Jeffery Amherst, *The Journal of Jeffery Amherst: Recording the Military Career of General Amherst in America from 1758 to 1763*, ed. J. Clarence Webster (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1931), 59.

failings. Causing trouble or failing to perform their duties could result in brutal corporal punishment or, more often, banishment from camp, still a severe punishment for a woman whose livelihood depended on proximity to her husband or military work. Ultimately, a woman following the army subjected herself to the whims of her commanding officer as well as the tides of war.

While military life brought many hardships it also offered some opportunity. Women who followed the army could earn their own keep or make some supplementary income for their family in exchange for providing invaluable support as nurses, laundresses, and cooks. The labour of these women came at a low cost to the military and freed up men for training and fighting. Women also gained opportunities to make a profit buying and selling goods to soldiers if they had the means to do business. Prostitution and selling contraband or stolen items also offered women opportunities to earn income if they were willing or desperate enough to take on the associated risks. In these ways military life gave women a chance for economic sustainability. Even though pay and conditions usually proved quite poor, many women likely chose to follow the army to stay close to the men they loved and depended on, rather than be left behind.

Choosing this life allowed them to stay close to their men and to care for their families. It also allowed them to keep their children with their fathers. It may have also been the only option open to them after marrying a soldier who then went on campaign. While harsh and uncertain, military life did offer a degree of domesticity and community. Being a part of the camp community and, more importantly, being a part of their own families likely figured as a great benefit to these women. Being able to stay with their partners and families and the opportunity

to make money and earn food for their partners and families seems to have outweighed the hardships for many women.

Army women have never received the recognition that they deserve. They lived alongside their soldier partners and shared in their fights and struggles throughout the Seven Years' War. Looking at how they lived shows us the extremes of life for women living in a man's world during this time period. Their presence contributed to military camps both through their labour and support of military endeavours as well as through their care for their families and their contribution to the domestic realm of army life. Despite the military environment, family life was central for these women while their labour in trying to keep their families together served to aid the military and the interests of Britain.

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