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MILITARY MASCULINITY AND CULTURE CHANGE IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Briefing Paper

**Edited by Maya Eichler, John Whelan,
Lea Aluie, and Kimberley Smith-Evans**



**CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN MILITARY AFFAIRS**



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Centre for Social Innovation and
Community Engagement in Military Affairs (SICEMA)
McCain Centre, Room 203 A
Mount Saint Vincent University
166 Bedford Highway
Halifax, NS B3M 2J6
Canada
csi@msvu.ca

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Biographies of Contributors

Catherine Baillie-Abidi, PhD, is an Assistant Professor with the Department of Child and Youth Study at Mount Saint Vincent University and has over 20 years of experience working in peace and security. Dr. Baillie Abidi specializes in children, peace, and security, and as a scholarly practitioner, prioritizes participatory research with communities, including in the security sector. Dr. Baillie Abidi collaborates with the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace, and Security and leads a research program focused on violence prevention leading to new social policy and enhanced children's rights frameworks.

Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic, PhD, is the Postdoctoral Fellow and Network Coordinator at the Transforming Military Cultures Network. Her PhD dissertation is called *Canadian women in peacekeeping: Opportunities, challenges, continuities, and disruptions*. Her research interests include gender and the armed forces, feminist international relations, feminist security studies, Women, Peace and Security, gender and inequality.

Walter Callaghan is a PhD candidate in Medical Anthropology at the University of Toronto. His doctoral research has focused on how veterans come to understand, explain, and make meaning of psychological distress, particularly moral injuries. His research interests also include issues related to military masculinity, gender, and stigma. He previously served as a health care administration officer in the Canadian Armed Forces, 2001-2010.

Maya Eichler, PhD, holds the Canada Research Chair in Social Innovation and Community Engagement and is an associate professor of Political and Canadian Studies and Women's Studies at Mount Saint Vincent University (Halifax, NS). She is also the director of the Centre for Social Innovation and Community Engagement in Military Affairs at Mount Saint Vincent University. Her research focuses on gender and the armed forces, military sexual violence, transforming military culture, military-to-civilian transitions, and community stories of war and peace. She is one of the co-directors of the DND-MINDS funded international collaborative network Transforming Military Cultures.

Tammy George, PhD, is an Interdisciplinary Scholar and Educator in the Faculty of Health Science, School of Kinesiology in the area of Critical Socio-Cultural & Policy Studies in Sport & Physical Activity at York University. Her current research lies at the intersection of critical military studies, racial violence and mental health and is one of the co-directors of the Transforming Military Cultures Network. She is also a psychotherapy candidate at the Toronto Institute for Contemporary Psychoanalysis.

Biographies of Contributors

Ken W. A. Hoffer, CD Captain(N) RCN, Retired, served for thirty-five years as a naval warfare officer in the Royal Canadian Navy. His tours of duty included many complex and challenging operational assignments, both at home and abroad. He has commanded at sea and ashore in several key operational appointments and was recognized for his outstanding leadership and resource management skills. Ken has supported the Dallaire Institute in facilitating the training of security sector actors in Sierra Leone, Kenya, Uganda, and Rwanda. He currently provides consulting expertise on several key projects, including research on the mental health effects on security sector personnel who encounter children used as soldiers.

Johanna Masse, PhD, is a postdoctoral research fellow at the School of Politics and International Relations, University College Dublin, Ireland. Her research is on gender and political conflict, as well as gender stereotypes and military organizations.

Donald McCreary, PhD, is an Adjunct Professor of Psychology at Brock University (St. Catharines, Ontario, Canada) and owner of Donald McCreary Scientific Consulting (British Columbia, Canada). He has studied the psychology of gender for over 35 years, co-editing the 2-volume Handbook of Gender Research in Psychology (Springer, 2010). In 2004, Don was awarded a Fellowship in the American Psychological Association in recognition of his career contributions to the psychological study of men, masculinity, and gender. He was also awarded the Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal (Governor General of Canada) for his work supporting the mental health and well-being of those serving in the Canadian Armed Forces. Don is honoured to be ranked in the top 2% of the most impactful scientists in the world (across 22 scientific fields and 176 subfields; doi: <https://doi.org/10.17632/btchxktzyw.4>).

Kathryn Reeves is a fourth-year student at Mount Saint Vincent University, where she is completing her Honors degree in Psychology with a double minor in Business Administration and Sociology/Anthropology. Raised in a military family, Kathryn has centered her research on the unique perspectives that military children offer.

Biographies of Contributors

Tod Augusta Scott, MSW, RSW, is known internationally for his work in gendered-based violence, restorative approaches, trauma, and narrative therapy. He has been the Executive Director and lead therapist in a community-based organization for over twenty-five years. For the past fifteen years, he has also worked as a family therapist for the Canadian Armed Forces. Mr Augusta-Scott is the co-founder of the Canadian Domestic Violence Conference. He received an Award of Excellence from the Deputy Minister of National Defence for his work addressing sexual misconduct in the CAF (2019).

Duncan Shields, PhD is an Adjunct Professor in the Faculty of Medicine at the University of British Columbia and a psychologist focusing in the area of operational stress and the support and maintenance of resilience under operational load. He is a co-founder of “Blueprint”, a university-affiliated NGO working to enhance the integrity and well-being of men for the benefit of families and communities, and with sports, police, and fire organizations to foster inclusive, resilient, and high-performing work cultures.

Nancy Taber, PhD is a Professor in the Department of Educational Studies and Program Director of Adult Education at Brock University. Her research explores the ways in which learning, gender, and militarism intersect in daily life, popular culture, museums, educational institutions, and military organizations. Her work often draws on her experiences serving in the Canadian military as a Sea King helicopter air navigator. Dr. Taber is a former President of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education and the former Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Journal for the Study of Adult Education.

John Whelan, PhD is a Navy Veteran, Adjunct Professor at Mount Saint Vincent University, and psychologist with over twenty-five years’ experience working with serving and retired members of the military and RCMP.

Military Masculinity and Culture Change in the Canadian Armed Forces

*By Maya Eichler and John Whelan,
Mount Saint Vincent University*

Introduction

Over the past decades, questions about the CAF's culture have emerged with respect to its impact on diverse military members. A long list of external and internal reports and surveys, class action lawsuits, media reports, and first-person accounts attest to the negative and discriminatory impacts of the culture on those who do not fit the traditional image and ideal of the male, masculine, white, heterosexual, and able-bodied soldier.[1] It has become evident, that gender norms are one central aspect of the military's culture that requires serious interrogation and rethinking (in addition to, and in intersection with, additional norms related to heteronormativity, colonialism, white supremacy, ability, and more).

We believe that interrogating and reimagining dominant forms of military masculinity is a key step towards advancing the culture change sought after by the military (Government of Canada 2021b). To better understand the relationship between military masculinity and military culture change, we held a workshop at Mount Saint Vincent University in June 2022 titled "*How a revised masculinity can help foster culture change in the Canadian Armed Forces.*" Culture can be defined as "a product of the social environment and includes a shared sense of values, norms, ideas, symbols, and meanings" (Redmond et al. 2015, 10). The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) defines this culture as consisting of "structures, behaviours, norms, values, attitudes and assumptions that the organization has developed over time and implemented as an effective means of

[1] For example: See O'Hara (1998a, 1998b, 1998c, 2014), Mercier and Castonguay (2014), and Pugliese (2021) for key media reports detailing the long-standing and ongoing problem of sexual harassment and sexual assault in the military; see Deschamps, (2015), Cotter (2016), and Arbour (2021) for key external reports and surveys highlighting the problem of military sexual misconduct; see the Minister's advisory panel report (Government of Canada 2022c) highlighting systemic racism and colonialism in DND/CAF for a key internal report; see The LGBT Purge and Heyder-Beattie class actions (St. Louis, 2018; Fothergill, 2019), settled in 2018 and 2019 respectively, and the ongoing racism class action (Stewart McKelvey 2022) as examples of class actions documenting the multiple problems with the military's culture; and, see Perron (2019) and Thompson (2019) for examples of first-person accounts that highlight military's culture problem in relation to sexual misconduct.

maintaining internal order, social and psychological stability, and adaptation to the environment” (Government of Canada 2021a). This culture is seen as central to the military’s operational excellence, at the same time as it profoundly shapes the climate within the organization (Ibid.).

Existing research demonstrates that the specific form of masculinity fostered by military training contributes to interpersonal and sexualized violence in military contexts (Whitworth 2004; Razack 2004). Specifically, the roots of hostile and problematic aspects of the CAF culture lie within a privileged masculinity that emphasizes stoicism, heroism, aggression, and a ‘suck it up’ mentality mediated by rank-based power relationships. This form of masculinity is expected to be adopted and enacted by all members of the CAF, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, or rank. Furthermore, behaviours and attitudes associated with this form of masculinity have also been linked to chronic traumatic stress among medically released members (Whelan and Eichler 2022).

The centre piece of this report is comprised of nine briefs written in follow-up to the workshop we held in June of 2022. During our workshop, we heard presentations from former military members, current defence scientists, civilian researchers, and practitioners working with military members and their families. After the workshop, we asked some of our presenters as well as additional individuals to contribute briefing papers on the questions of “What are the problems with existing notions of military masculinity?” and “What alternative forms of masculinity can serve the CAF towards the goal of culture change and support the wellbeing of its military personnel?” These contributions are assembled in this report, and we briefly discuss them below before providing some insights of our own. This report also includes a graphic recording of our workshop discussion (created by James Neish) as well as an annotated bibliography of research on military/militarized masculinities (put together by Kathryn Reeves), both of which can be found at the end of this report (Appendix A and B, respectively).

Understanding and changing military masculinities: Contributions to this report

Donald R. McCreary, in his piece on “*Precarious Manhood and Masculinity Contest Cultures in the Military Context*”, argues that the military work environment can reinforce a wide range of traditional masculine norms due to the high degree of masculine contest culture in militaries and the constant need for external validation of one's precarious manhood. Some of those norms can be strengths under certain circumstances, but they may also lead to poor physical

and mental health. Thus, attempts at military culture change need to take into account the dynamics of competing and precarious masculinity.

In his piece, "*Towards an Aspirational Military Masculine Ethos*," Duncan Shields suggests that the CAF could move towards an aspirational masculinity centred on the requirements of the mission rather than a false conflation of stereotypical images of masculinity with performance and competence. Such an aspirational masculinity could promote a stronger, mission-supportive culture based on "a new model of a strong, high-performing, ethical, pro-social, and professional military masculinity that would also set an example for the broader Canadian community it seeks to serve and protect."

Johanna Masse's piece focuses on "*Military Masculinity at a Crossroads: Soldiering Beyond the Warrior Ethos*." She acknowledges that the cultivation of aggression and violence is seen as a core feature of current constructions of military masculinity. She proposes a radical but incrementalist approach redefining military masculinity and widening "in-group characteristics, and thus supplying an ideal type to which all service members can aspire to regardless of gender, race, sexuality, etc."

Tammy George suggests in "*Thinking through Military Masculinity and Whiteness*" that we cannot understand military masculinity without considering its intersections with whiteness and white supremacy. Accordingly, the CAF is embedded within broader social structures of whiteness rooted in colonial and eugenicist foundations. Reimagining military masculinity requires confronting these white supremacist colonial roots head on, while also understanding their broader social ties.

Tod Augusta Scott's contribution, "*Addressing Unhelpful Ideas about Masculinity in the Canadian Armed Forces: A Practitioner's Perspective*," argues that we need to avoid negatively labelling all individuals within the CAF in efforts to change the culture. It is important to separate individual military members from the institution and avoid reproducing essentialist ideas about men and women. Instead, we should seek out non-confrontational conversations based on a strength-based approach that would allow the CAF leadership to acknowledge ongoing abuses of power.

Walter Callaghan, in "*The Multiplicity of Masculinities: Not Just About Men and Maleness*," cautions us against seeing military masculinity as inherently tied to male bodies. He argues that masculinities are performed regardless of sex, gender, or sexual orientation, and that an alternative form of military masculinity

—premised on caring and nurturing—already exists within the military, especially in the medical corps. This alternative form of military masculinity could be fostered and emulated more broadly in an effort to advance culture change.

Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic's piece on "*Operational Effectiveness and Peacekeeper Masculinity*" describes peacekeeping as providing an alternative to military masculinity. However, as she argues, a focus on women's contributions to peacekeeping as a way to enhance operational effectiveness may harm the construction of a peacekeeper masculinity and of other alternative masculinities. She suggests a better way forward would be to focus on men enacting similar skills to those expected of women when deployed on peacekeeping operations.

The piece by Catherine Baillie Abidi, Ken Hoffer, and Kathryn Reeves, "*Transforming Military Masculinity Through a Children, Peace and Security Lens*," suggests that effective and transformative leadership requires both masculine and feminine values. These values should be grounded in building equitable relationships and collaboration with local and international communities (including children and youth) to enhance moral agency and critical reflexivity in international peace missions.

Nancy Taber's piece, "*Applying Adult Education Theories to Understand Militarized Masculinities*," argues for reimagining military masculinity from a critical paradigm that "promotes questioning of the status quo, changing worldviews, critiquing power relations, acknowledging complexity, fostering open-endedness, and reimagining structures." As Taber importantly asks, Who benefits from the warrior ideal? Who does it harm? And is it needed?

Below we share some lessons and recommendations from our perspective as convenors of the workshop and editors of this report.

Culture change and military masculinity

As seen in the contributions to this report and also noted in the research (e.g., Eichler 2014; Bulmer and Eichler 2017; Parpart and Partridge 2014), multiple masculinities are at play within militaries across different subgroups and their subcultures. For instance, there are differences in the construction of masculinity norms between occupational groups (e.g., medical corps versus combat engineers), between the Regular Force and Reserve Force, between the Officer Corps and NCMs, and also between the Army, Navy, and Air Force—each steeped within their respective traditions and histories. Thus, notions of military masculinity intersect with multiple subcultures within the overarching military

culture. Additionally, attitudes and behaviours required for in-garrison life differ from notions of masculinity and soldiering seen to be required for operations. Thus, when we talk about culture change, we must be clear about which aspects of the culture—and thus which aspects of military masculinity norms—are the focus of change efforts. It may be relatively straightforward to determine and prescribe what an alternative military masculinity looks like for in-garrison life, but it is a more complex task to think through how an alternative military masculinity can be adopted and implemented on operations.

This is important because mission success and operational effectiveness remain taken for granted as the primary and ultimate goals of the CAF, even as culture change has come to be recognized as an important priority. As also seen in the contributions to this report, the ideal of soldiering is still seen to require an aggressive attitude enacted in the pursuit of getting things done at any cost, including taking the lives of others or sacrificing one's own. While there are multiple masculinities operating within militaries, it is the specific form of masculinity that emphasizes stoicism, heroism, aggression, and a 'suck it up' mentality—the warrior ideal—that is seen as necessary for operational effectiveness and mission success, and thus elusive to or in tension with culture change efforts (Breede and Davis 2020). In military contexts, new members undergo a harsh, sometimes humiliating, and physically and emotionally exhausting socialization process which aims to get them to internalize the prevailing cultural norms and adopt a new identity centred on the warrior ideal (Whelan and Eichler 2019). CAF members are expected, and rewarded for, performing this form of military masculinity regardless of race, sex, gender identity, or rank, and often penalized for performing forms of masculinity that deviate from it.

Also, we need to consider the intersections of masculinity with other factors, including white supremacy, colonialism, and heteronormativity. For example, masculine codes fostered within the CAF are rooted in eugenic ideologies introduced in the United Kingdom at the turn of the 19th century, and adopted into Canadian political, legal, and medical systems from the beginning (Dowbiggin 1997; Taber 2018). These beliefs in the "good breeding stock" of white European men asserted their "god given" rights to dominate the environment, Indigenous peoples of North America, and other non-white people. "Real men" are still expected to demonstrate qualities of bravery, courage, and domination over identified enemies (Grossman, 2009; Whelan, 2014, 2016). When this belief in male entitlement and superiority to control one's environment and other people is coupled with the denigration and hatred of identified enemies and other devalued persons, the inevitable outcomes are acts of violence against "others"

(e.g., women, 2SLGBTQ+, People of Colour, Middle Eastern and Asian people, and Indigenous people) (also see Whitworth 2004; Razack 2004). Thus, rethinking the dominant form of military masculinity requires an intersectional approach that takes into account its interconnectedness with other systems of power and privilege.

Current military culture change efforts describe “bravery, professional excellence, and a tradition of heroism” as “strengths” of the warrior identity (Government of Canada, 2022a). The military’s proposed evolution of this warrior identity aims to “recognize that warriors should be both physically fit and emotionally adaptable” (Government of Canada, 2022b). What exactly this means in practice is ambiguous, especially if traditional understandings of the ideal warrior remain intact in informal cultural settings. It will be impossible to challenge the dominant form of military masculinity rooted in the warrior ideal without explicitly addressing the underlying power structures of patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, and classism that reproduce it and without considering informal cultural settings (Eichler, George, and Taber 2023).

While much attention has focused on the regulative (formal policies and directives) aspects of the CAF, less attention has focused on unwritten normative values and vicarious learning between members. This invisible dimension includes the shared prioritization of qualities including emotional toughness, focused self-control, physical and mental strength, and demonstrations of one’s capacity for violence as defining features of the social ecology of military life. These shared beliefs in required masculine values and codes are understood by all and are expected to be displayed across gender diverse and racialized minorities (Callaghan, 2014; Shields, Kuhl, and Westwood 2017). Expectations of personal sacrifices and doing whatever is necessary to contribute to the team are intertwined with each member’s sense of purpose and self-worth (Eichler et al. 2017). Against this backdrop, strongly held assumptions about perceived weakness among members who fail to live up to accepted masculine codes often mean that distressed members can experience self-repudiation or disdain, and even open hostility from others for failures to ‘man-up’ (Callaghan 2014).

Implications

We suggest that internal culture change efforts must include explicit and informed discussions of operational effectiveness as the foundational tenet of the CAF since everything else, including culture change efforts, is relegated to secondary consideration. Today, the CAF is being pulled in many directions in the context of domestic challenges and a world that is perceived to be unstable with

multiple threats. What are the implications of this geopolitical context and of the primacy of operations for culture change efforts and for rethinking dominant notions of military masculinity that remain rooted in the warrior ideal, even if in a slightly evolved or more inclusive way? Does operational effectiveness need to be reconceptualized?

We also suggest that internal culture change efforts must include explicit and informed discussions of the underlying structures of power and privilege, including patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, and classism, that both shape and reproduce discrimination and hostility towards marginalized groups within the military (Eichler and Brown 2023). Without such a discussion, culture change efforts remain superficial and do not address the root causes of the problem, and thus risk not leading to meaningful change.

Finally, we suggest that internal culture change efforts and conversations about how to reimagine military masculinity require external input and renewed military-civilian engagement. However, on a cautionary note, civilian culture and institutions, while generally upholding more progressive values than the military, tend to also reproduce the warrior ideal and an outdated image of soldiers as Second World War veterans. With little to no opportunity for direct engagement and input, civilians are largely disengaged from the military. Formal advertising campaigns by the CAF display intensity and adventure, but this does not necessarily reflect the inner workings and day-to-day mundane routines within the military. More opportunities for learning and discussion across military and civilian spheres are needed.

The question of culture change requires a broader societal reflection and national discussion across military and civilian spheres on what traits and behaviours an “ideal” military member should have in 2023 and how these traits and behaviours relate to broader societal gender norms. Ultimately, this will require tackling a broader set of questions about what kind of military Canadians want and need, what the defining elements of the military’s culture should be, and whether and how the military’s culture should reflect or diverge from civilian culture in the future (Eichler and Breeck 2021).

Recommendations and questions for moving forward

- 1** Recognize that multiple masculinities operate within militaries. Which masculinities are being left untouched by current culture change efforts? Which masculinities are being reproduced and amplified by current culture change efforts?
- 2** Recognize that dominant notions of military masculinity – of the ideal soldier – are reproduced as much, or even more significantly, by informal learning than by interactions with formal policies and directives. How can culture change efforts target the informal reproduction of harmful or unhelpful notions of masculinity within the military context?
- 3** Recognize that operational effectiveness is perceived to be in tension with redefining military masculinity. How do current culture change efforts address this perceived tension? Do they allow for reconceptualizing operational effectiveness? How does operational effectiveness need to be reconceptualized to advance the culture change being sought?
- 4** Recognize that problematic aspects of military masculinity are tied to broader social structures such as patriarchy, colonialism, white supremacy, heteronormativity, ableism, and classism. How are current culture change efforts addressing these root causes?
- 5** Recognize that meaningful transformative culture change requires a de-centering of the white Anglo-Saxon, heteronormative, ableist masculinity norm. How can current military culture change efforts centre an alternative masculinity? And how can culture change efforts amplify and promote already existing alternative masculinities within the military context that are more helpful in advancing the culture change being sought?
- 6** Recognize that meaningful transformative culture change requires a renewed military-civilian relationship based on direct engagement, transparency, stronger external oversight, and institutional accountability. How can current culture change efforts promote more direct two-way military-civilian engagements, including about what an alternative military masculinity could look like, without a focus on public relations and image management for the military?
- 7** Recognize that meaningful transformative culture change requires a broader national conversation about what the role of the CAF should be in 2023 and into the future—hopefully something the ongoing 2023 Defence Policy Update will contribute to. How can current culture change efforts do more to reflect a forward-looking view on the evolving nature of the CAF's purpose and what kind of military masculinities and femininities will be required in the future?

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Precarious Manhood and Masculinity Contest Cultures in the Military Context

By Donald R. McCreary, Brock University

Masculinity represents a set of socially constructed ways of thinking, being, and interacting with the world. However, within the psychological sciences, there are numerous ways to both conceptualize and operationalize masculinity (McCreary 2016, 2021) . All these ways of thinking about and measuring masculinity are valid, and each one has important, unique, and overlapping implications and applications to the military environment.

In my opinion, two relatively new, yet interrelated, ways of thinking about masculinity are highly relevant when it comes to understanding how masculinity is actualized within military culture: *Precarious Manhood and Masculinity Contest Culture*. This chapter will provide a brief overview of these two approaches. Space is limited, so a discussion of their implications for the health and well-being of those serving in the military, as well as the ways in which military culture reinforces traditional masculine roles and the difficulties militaries can face when attempting to change this aspect of their culture, is beyond my remit. However, I will use relevant examples whenever possible and provide references that will act as starting points for ongoing discovery.

Precarious Manhood

All approaches to the psychological study of masculinity reflect the notion that society teaches people of every gender about the social norms and expectations around what is typically a gender binary—masculinity and femininity. In that traditional approach, those identifying as men are expected to prioritize conforming to masculine role norms and are socially sanctioned by others (mostly other men, but women as well) for failing to meet gender role expectations and acting in ways deemed stereotypically feminine (McCreary 1994). The different approaches to masculinity described in some of my previous work (McCreary 2016, 2021) tend to focus on the various dimensions of masculinity and the stresses and strains experienced by men when they either conform or fail to conform to these gendered norms and expectations. Precarious manhood is different from those models in that its focus is more on providing a better understanding of why men choose to perform in masculine ways in some contexts, but not in others.

In the precarious manhood model, displaying masculinity/being masculine is the main way of being perceived as manly as achieving manhood. There are three main tenets to this model. First, manhood is something that is achieved or earned, not inherent within the person. This means that for men to be seen as manly, they must be observed performing in ways that society has deemed appropriate for men. Moreover, they must also be excelling in that masculine performance. Substandard expressions of, or deviations from, traditional masculine gender roles (e.g., the norms around the importance of stoicism and the lack of emotional expression) are seen as weaknesses and can threaten men's achievement of manhood. Additionally, transgressing gender role norms is perceived as highly problematic for men and boys, and can often lead to some form of social sanctioning. Thus, men will attempt to excel in the tasks and duties required of them to avoid being perceived as weak and unmasculine. Similarly, the expression of physical or emotional pain or suffering while undergoing difficult training or performing specific job requirements (even dangerous, demanding, and strenuous ones) may also be seen as weakness. This is an especially significant issue in a military environment because, as mentioned earlier, men are the predominant gatekeepers of gender role conformity in men; they punish failures to meet expectations and transgressions often and harshly. And given the male-dominated nature of most military occupations, this means there is a huge potential for publicly failing to meet these socially determined expectations for masculinity and manhood. This risk must be constantly managed and failure avoided.

The second aspect of precarious manhood is that it can be taken away at any time, meaning that men are constantly under threat of losing the label. Because of this, men feel a need to perform in masculine ways as often as possible. Deciding when not to act in typically masculine ways often means assessing the likelihood of being punished for transgressing gender norms. When the risks are too high, they are more likely to perform in stereotypically masculine ways; when the risks are low, they may not only fail to act in a masculine manner, but they may even act in ways that society has deemed stereotypically feminine. There are many applications of this tenet in the military context. For example, being in close contact with others in the hypermasculine military work environment means that these men may feel a strong need to conform to traditional masculine norms on a consistent basis. There may not be many safe spaces during typical day-to-day operations where they do not feel this pressure to conform. Some social situations (e.g., drinking in a bar with one's colleagues), however, may provide a respite from the normal pressures to conform.

The third tenet is that manhood is something that is awarded by others, not something they can grant to themselves. This means that men are always attempting to affirm their manhood in a public manner. It matters less how they act when they are alone, but it is a different story when they are in public. This does not mean that men don't engage in stereotypically masculine role norms when they are on their own; the evidence shows that they do. It's that performing in a masculine way is heightened when they have (or think they have) an audience.

Numerous experimental studies have shown that, when men are told they are not acting or performing at the same level as other men or the typical man, or that women are performing better than them in the same situation, they increase the degree to which they engage in stereotypically masculine behaviors and interactions with others (Vandello and Bosson 2013). The research also shows that men reduce their expression of actual or intended feminine-type attitudes and behaviors (Cheryan et al. 2015). Some of the masculine norms that men enhance when their masculinity is threatened have known negative implications for their physical and psychological health (e.g., risk-taking, stoicism) and increased risks for women and other men (e.g., physical aggression and violence) (McCreary 2016; Bosson and Vandello 2011) .

There has not been much application of the concept of precarious manhood to our understanding of masculinity among military men. As a result, the elements of the military context that can trigger these three aspects of precarious manhood, or how military men manage the risks to their manhood, are not well understood.

Masculinity Contest Culture

Berdahl, Cooper, Glick, Livingston, and Williams recently proposed a workplace-based extension of precarious manhood: the Masculinity Contest Culture (MCC) model (Berdahl et al. 2018). They argue that certain workplace cultures overemphasize traditionally negative elements of masculinity and incorporate conformity to those hypermasculine elements into their workplace culture and performance expectations.

There are four aspects to Masculinity Contest Culture. The first dimension is *Show No Weakness*. On the one hand, this is about creating a culture where people are expected to be outwardly confident and correct in their decisions and the actions they take. Being wrong is not an option, and apologies are seen as a sign of weakness. This aspect of MCC also incorporates the traditionally masculine proscription against engaging in stereotypically feminine-typed behaviors,

emotions, and interactional styles (e.g., collaboration vs. competition), which are often perceived by men as a sign of being weak and ineffectual.

The second aspect of MCC is about *Strength and Stamina*. In other words, organizations that are high in this element promote the importance of hard work and long hours. These organizations also emphasize the importance of face time and being seen in the workspace (e.g., at desks and in meetings). In some situations, not being present is reframed to suggest that absent people are letting down others on the team. The notion of being strong is especially relevant to the issue of being sick (physically or psychologically) and the importance of not taking sick leave. In other words, these organizations strongly reward presenteeism and deem those who engage in self-care as weak.

The third MCC element is *Put Work First*. In other words, work is more important than friends or family. It is a throwback to the stereotypically overworked and absent father, whose sense of masculinity was all about personal success and supporting the proverbial family in an almost entirely financial way. By prioritizing work, there is a premium attached to not taking earned breaks or vacations. This may include parental leave, which is rarely taken by men. In fact, not having taken vacations or other leave may even be a sense of pride among many working in these organizations. This domain is obviously related to the *Strength and Stamina* element, especially as it pertains to the proscription around taking time off when sick.

The last MCC component is called *Dog-Eat-Dog*. This refers to the hypercompetitive work environment created by the leaders of these organizations. In this type of workplace, there are clear winners and losers. Winners are rewarded with a range of job perks, including better/more prominent work tasks and fast-tracked promotions. Losers are marginalized and made fun of. This type of focus creates a “win at all costs” mentality and can facilitate a wide range of workplace mental health issues, from burnout to bullying, harassment, and other forms of incivility.

It is important to note that MCC is not an all-or-nothing concept; rather, organizations fall on a continuum (from low to high) in terms of how much of a MCC they have incorporated into their culture (Berdahl et al. 2018). This is a relatively new concept, so the impact of MCC on the mental health of workers has not yet been examined in depth. Nor have a wide range of organizations been assessed for MCC. However, preliminary research suggests that organizations with a rigid hierarchical structure (e.g., police, military) may tend to be higher in MCC (Berdahl et al. 2018; Rawski and Workman-Stark 2018).

Masculine Contest Culture is obviously a toxic organizational element. Decades of occupation health psychology research has confirmed that these elements often cause poor physical and mental health among workers (McCreary 2022). Not only are there substantial risks to workers' mental and physical health, but there are also potential legal risks as the broader culture develops a better understanding and lower risk tolerance of the kinds of behaviors rewarded in these contexts (Canadian Standard Association 2013). Because the concept is so new, there have also been no studies examining how organizations with a high level of MCC can change their culture to be less harmful and more accepting but still equally effective and successful.

Summary

By way of summary, the combined concepts of precarious manhood and masculine context culture describe several important factors that can affect men's motivation to engage in a range of traditional aspects of masculinity, as well as cause them to experience stress and strain in those instances when they feel they are not meeting societal expectations for manhood. The high degree of masculine contest culture in militaries, combined with the constant need for the external validation of one's manhood inherent in the precarious manhood context, make the military work environment one that can reinforce a wide range of traditional masculine norms. While some of those norms can be strengths in many contexts, they may also lead to poor physical and mental health in others.

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Towards an Aspirational Military Masculine Ethos

By Duncan Shields,

University of British Columbia and "Blueprint"

At a time when public attention has been focused on inquiries into sexual misconduct in the military and recent judicial reviews have called out the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) for a “culture hostile” towards females and LGBTQ members, there is intense pressure to dismantle the insular nature of the military and create a safer, more representative, and inclusive military force (Deschamps 2015; Arbour 2022). Researchers have pointed to “military masculine culture” as an important contributor to the ethos in which these harms occur. Yet, despite a catalogue of documented harms and decades of efforts to foster change, there is general acknowledgement, both within and outside the CAF, that progress has been slow and new approaches are required (Eichler 2020).

Military Masculinities

It is widely recognized that military training leverages and reframes masculinities as a means of preparing recruits of any sex or gender for service, promoting traditionally masculine associated values and behaviors, such as strength, toughness, stoicism, aggressiveness, and competitiveness (for example, Alfred et al. 2014; Brooks 2010; Fox and Pease 2012; Shields 2016). This emphasis on militarized masculinities in training underscores the historically adaptive and functional nature of these norms in supporting mission goals (Shields 2018). For example, masculine gender precepts to confront and suppress aspects of human experience such as fear, pain, horror, disgust, grief, or fatigue and that amplify aggression, may be adaptive in that they help the soldier function in battle (Fowler 2010).

These military masculinities (as with other masculinities) derive their power to motivate by invoking both masculine ideals and the spectre of an opposite “other,” distained identity that awaits those who cannot live up to military masculine ideals or whose status becomes suspect (Butler 2006; Shields 2017). From early training and throughout a military career, members who cannot keep up or who exhibit sensitivity to harsh conditions are subjected to a variety of shaming, often gendered insults, and may be denied or stripped of membership in the group (Fox and Pease 2012; Shields 2018). The precarious and impermanent nature of military identity and belonging, enshrined in universality of service

policies, is seen as serving the mission. As one CAF member put it, “Military is a family and yet it’s also a hierarchy. There’s jostling for position, and everyone isn’t valid unless they’re at the sharp end of the stick. That mentality helps motivate people to do the hardest work” (Shields 2018, 14).

Alongside useful outcomes of militarized masculinity norms, scholars have linked high compliance with masculine norms with a variety of negative social, behavioural and health outcomes, many of which plague modern militaries today. Men who experience distress about living up to masculine ideals have been found to be more likely to act out in stereotypical masculine ways (e.g., aggression, risk-taking, hyper-sexuality, drinking) to confirm their masculinity to themselves and/or others (O’Neill 2008). At an organizational level, the conflation of performance with masculinity results in what scholars call a “masculinity contest culture” that requires members of all genders to continuously prove their conformity to masculine norms (Berdahl, Glick, and Cooper 2018). These attempts to measure up can interfere with group cohesion, mentorship, and learning, reduce decision quality, marginalize and harm others, and ultimately interfere with mission objectives (Brooks 2010; Shields 2018).

Masculine norms that idealize self-reliance and the suppression of pain have been linked to inhibited help seeking and stigmatization of health care usage (Baker et al. 2014; Mikkonen and Raphael 2010, 45). A “suck it up and soldier on” mentality creates an expectation of endurance but also allows problems to become chronic or a crisis before help is sought (Shields et al. 2018). Likewise, conforming to hyper-masculine ideals may prevent a constructive response to trauma when the necessary access and integration of emotional responses are suppressed (Tedeschi and Calhoun 2014). A military ethos that stigmatizes both physical and psychological injury (Frankl et al. 2018) may inadvertently precipitate members’ thwarted sense of belonging and a sense that they are a burden to their team (Wastler et al. 2020). These two states, along with the comfort with lethality gained from the nature of military work, make up the three essential conditions for suicidality identified in Joiner’s (2005) interpersonal theory of suicide. High conformity to masculine gender roles is also a well-documented risk factor for domestic or interpersonal violence, an issue of concern to the CAF (Reidy et al. 2014; Robb-Jackson and Sandra Campbell 2022).

In each of these areas, the problem is not the masculine-associated attributes per se but rather men’s experience of “falling short” and the resulting compulsive efforts to prove themselves sufficient in these characteristics (Vandello and Bosson 2013). Other models of masculinity exist that balance task-required aggressiveness, strength, or emotional detachment with access to a wider array

of traits and skillsets that better support relational and organizational outcomes. For example, an organizational culture change initiative for oil platform workers problematized certain stereotypically masculine traits (like recklessness, bravado, emotionlessness, and refusal to admit failure) while promoting behaviours aligned with high performance (such as taking accountability, mutual support, and learning from each other), resulting in sustained improvements in productivity and safety (Ely and Meyerson 2010).

Similarly, a longitudinal, multi-method study of firefighter crews showed a suite of positive impacts of a modified masculine norm (O'Neill and Rothbard 2018). Crew cultures were often characterized by emotion suppression and a preference for rationality over emotionality, but those that also showed high levels of companionate care for one another and joviality (a prototypical masculine emotion that includes a climate of good-natured teasing and pranks) showed faster coordination time during emergency calls, lower accident rates on the job, better home lives, and improved physical health.

An Aspirational Military Ethos

A thorough reckoning of the harms perpetrated by men and military masculine norms is needed, but calling attention to those harms alone has not translated into a safer, more inclusive community, nor eliminated mission and reputation damaging outcomes. A silent majority of male CAF members, who neither see themselves as part of the problem nor as part of a solution, need to be engaged in conversations about a more aspirational masculinity—a creative visioning process that engages men and others to identify and amplify the best of what a new masculine role norm could be in the context of Canadian military goals. The CAF “Healthy Relationships” campaign is an example of what is possible with a shift towards positive or aspirational messaging. The campaign shifted from previous anti-family-violence messaging to promoting positive, healthy, and equitable relationships and inspiring positive behaviour change in order to improve program engagement (Robb-Jackson and Campbell 2022).

Militaries are places of deep tradition, but are also leaders in innovation. The Canadian Armed Forces could define and leverage an aspirational masculinity that focuses people on the real requirements of the mission rather than conflating performance with stereotypical images believed to equate with competence. Doing so would forge a stronger, mission-supportive culture that includes a new model of a strong, high-performing, ethical, pro-social, and professional military masculinity that would also set an example for the broader Canadian community it seeks to serve and protect.

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Military Masculinity at a Crossroads: Soldiering Beyond the Warrior Ethos

By Johanna Masse, University College Dublin

Organizational cultures are notoriously difficult to change. The military culture may even be more so, due to the multifaceted uniqueness of the military institution (Soeters 2018; Enloe 1983; Peterson and Runyan 2014).[1] It does not mean it cannot be done with the necessary resources. It will not, however, happen overnight. Moreover, it will presuppose a better understanding of the military ethos as it is—and as we want it to become in the future—as well as a better understanding of what it means in terms of ‘military masculinity.’ Providing a new, ‘revised,’ and more inclusive model of ‘military masculinity’ is definitely a step in the right direction when it comes to ensuring a military culture change that is not only skin-deep. But it will not be enough on its own. It needs to be accompanied by an open debate and deconstruction of what is deemed traditional military masculinity.

When we talk about military culture, we refer to “those particular beliefs, values, and other symbolic productions that organize and sustain military organization” (Burk 1999, 447). Talking about culture in the singular is, of course, a bit misleading as it encompasses various subcultures (Wilson 2007, 18; Rosen 1991; Snider 1999).[2] But they have in common their gendered and traditionally (hyper)masculine cultures, the military itself being widely recognized as an extremely gendered institution (Sasson-Levy 2011). As Whitworth explained: “Soldiers are not born, they are made; and part of what goes into the making of a soldier is a celebration and reinforcement of some of the most aggressive and most insecure elements of masculinity: those that promote violence, misogyny, homophobia, and racism” (Whitworth 2004, 3; Kovitz 1998, 309).[3] Masculinity, in itself, is not the issue. It is often referred to as the “combat, masculine-warrior” paradigm (CMW) (Dunivin 1994), or more simply as the “warrior ethos” (Youngman 2000).

[1] Because of its combat-related nature.

[2] “...military culture is fragmented, exhibiting different, possibly contradictory attitudes and behaviour within the same army” (Wilson 2007, 18).

[3] In the same vein, see described: “Military masculinity is based on a binarized meaning system and bifurcated social reality which sees the military repudiate attachments to life and private interests, and construct soldiers as men: unattached and mobile, violent and risk-taking, misogynistic. yet dedicated to obedient dying and killing in defence of those relegated to the social world of the defended – and a set of higher, amorphous ideals” (Kovitz 1998, 309).

Youngman notes that the warrior ethos only appeared in the late 1980s and early 1990s—replacing the previous ‘model’ of the “citizen soldier” in military culture—and soon took root in many Western democracies (Youngman 2000). In such a model, the ‘warrior’ is seen as the embodiment of the combat arms’ values, “the point of the spear” (Snider 1999, 21). It is interesting to note that the resurgence of the warrior ethos, at the cultural level, coincides with a structural redefinition of the military’s mission and institution in many countries, Canada included, and with the military’s professionalization and integration of women. Yet, one of the characteristics of the warrior model is its clannishness and reliance on a strict divide between the in-group and the out-group. In this case, the out-group encompasses all the ones who do not fit flawlessly in the warrior ideal type: primarily the civilians, but also other servicemembers who do not display characteristics associated with the model. According to the model’s proponents, aggressiveness is key to operational effectiveness, and the inclusion of the out-group’s members—especially women—weakens the in-group’s cohesiveness.

But as it was already recognized two decades ago, “...the warrior model so extolled by our modern armed forces bears almost no relation to any real warrior of any society at any time. In its present form, it is largely an artificial construct, a romanticized fiction that echoes the ‘noble savage’ icon of the Age of Enlightenment” (St Denis 2001, 31). Moreover, as it was soon realized, the warrior identity is not without danger and issues (Breede and Davis 2020), particularly when it comes to gender integration. Too often, ‘women’ and ‘warrior’ are indeed represented as mutually exclusive categories, and only at the expense of the first can the second be claimed (Gibson 1994; Archer 2012).[4]

Far from having its status as ‘hegemonic masculinity’ disrupted over the years, the prevalence of the ‘warrior’ ethos was reinforced during the war on terror (Lane 2017). It implies that without a clear commitment from the military leadership to distance themselves from what is seen as traditional military masculinity, the possibility of a real culture change is questionable. But as Connell explains, masculinity is not a “stable object of knowledge” (Connell 2005, 33) and hegemonic masculinity “is not a fixed character type, always and everywhere the same. It is, rather, the masculinity that occupies the hegemonic position in a given pattern of gender relations, a position always contestable” (Connell 2005, 76). Duncanson (2015) concurs and describes how, “[f]or the unravelling of hegemonic masculinity, men must be encouraged not so much to

[4] As Gibson (1994) explains, there are primarily two prototypes of womanhood in the warrior culture: the “good” women in need of protection and the “sexual” women who dominate men. Best case scenario, women are a necessary evil, and in the worst case, they weaken the military institution. See also Archer (2012).

change their ways as to change the way in which they negotiate their identities in relation to others” (233). She calls for a ‘regendering’ of the military (Duncanson and Woodward 2015, 12).[5]

This suggests that it is more a matter of progressively ‘adapting’ the military masculinity than revolutionizing it. ‘Radical incrementalism’ is the only way to bring forth a real cultural change when it comes to the military institution (Pieterse 2008, 6).[6] In more practical terms, instilling a new military masculinity necessitates revalorising what has been for too long seen as ‘feminine’ qualities by highlighting how they fit with the current CAF’s mission and values. It is important to have an open discussion and deconstruct what is deemed to be ‘masculine’ and what is deemed ‘feminine.’ This is one of the reasons why it is important to involve female bodies in ‘masculine’ activities to destabilize their connotations as masculine (Basham 2013; Cockburn and Hubic 2002; Duncanson and Woodward 2015; Hooper 2000). The idea is to provide a new “military myth” (Whitworth 2004) of soldiering, through a revised, more inclusive, military masculinity, one that relies on wider in-group characteristics, and thus supplying an ideal type to which all service members can aspire to regardless of gender, race, sexuality, etc. This revised military masculinity needs to be instilled from the very beginning, during basic training, and repeatedly alluded to along the way. The fact that CAF’s leadership openly supports culture change is important, but it is necessary to look at how such change and the new military ethos are experienced at every level of the hierarchy, especially at the lower ranks, as privates and other non-commissioned members remain the core of the military.

[5] Which translates into an identity transformation of soldiering, no longer represented as a “... masculine identity, but becom[ing] much more fluid, and is constructed through relations of equality, empathy, care, respect and recognition of similarities and share experiences” (Duncanson and Woodward 2015, 12).

[6] Radical incrementalism can be defined as “bringing change into the world through more discrete avenues: surreptitious, sometimes overt, and multiple small revolutions that at unanticipated and unexpected moments galvanize into deeper ruptures that accelerate tectonic shifts of the underlying logics of domination and what is considered possible. radical incrementalism is a disposition and sensibility that believes in deliberate actions of social transformation but through a multiplicity of processes and imaginations, none of which assumes or asserts a primary significance over other struggles” (Pieterse 2008, 6).

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Thinking through Military Masculinity and Whiteness in the Canadian Armed Forces

By Tammy George, York University

While the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) have traditionally been considered a “masculine institution”, what is often missing in conversations about military masculinity is its connection to whiteness and how larger systems of oppression such as settler colonialism, patriarchy, and white supremacy work to structure the CAF. Settler colonialism in Canada was and is a racialized project that has depended on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples for access to land and labour from the transatlantic slave trade to develop infrastructure (Thobani 2007). These larger structures of power have organized Canadian institutions in various ways, of which the CAF is no exception.

In recent years, white supremacist and neo-Nazi infiltration of the CAF has been a growing concern and increasingly a preoccupation for senior officials. The rise of white nationalism in the CAF has been considered an “active threat” to the heads of the Forces’ three branches—the Army, Navy, and Air Force—resulting in the release of specific directives against “hateful conduct” within the ranks last year (Boutilier 2021). More recently, *The Toronto Star* posed the question, “Why is it so hard for Canada’s military to root out white supremacists?” (Gallant 2022). What is revealing about these headlines is the seemingly exceptional nature of white supremacy in the ranks. However, a more complex question to ask is why the CAF is an attractive site for white supremacists and white nationalist groups. According to a 2019 report entitled, *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in the Canadian Armed Forces*, 89.1% identified as white Canadians and 84.6% identified as male. In response to the question of how a revised military masculinity can foster culture in the CAF, it is essential to consider the structural connections between military masculinity and whiteness that work to consolidate the status quo. If culture change within the CAF is to be truly effective, it is incumbent upon leadership, service members, and policymakers to understand that the structural operations of whiteness and white privilege are tethered to military masculinity in various ways.

On Whiteness and White Privilege

What is often missing in conversations about military masculinities is their connection to whiteness and white privilege. Often considered the invisible norm

in the West, I contend that to name whiteness is to refer to a set of locations that are historically, socially, politically, and culturally produced that are intimately connected to relations of domination (Frankenberg 1993). According to Ruth Frankenberg (1993), the way in which whiteness operates is multidimensional: “Whiteness is a location of structural advantage, of race privilege. Second, it is a ‘standpoint,’ a place from which White people look at [them]selves, at others, and at society. Third, whiteness refers to a set of cultural practices that are usually *unmarked and unnamed*” (1-2). For Frankenberg, whiteness works as a series of processes and practices rather than a singular bounded identity. What does it mean to de/centre specific processes and practices in the CAF? Which cultural practices within the CAF go unmarked and unnamed? In seeking to examine the production of whiteness within the CAF, we need to problematize some of the taken for granted dynamics involved in its production; that is, the unmarked norms, values, behaviors, traditions, symbolism, and colonial underpinnings that often bolster the social position of white soldiers, thereby establishing who can and cannot belong in the contemporary moment. Black Brazilian psychologist Cida Bento reminds us that whiteness is often times hidden, but always strongly operating. Naming whiteness as a product of colonial legacies reveals some of the foundational elements of the construction of the Canadian nation, of which the military apparatus is an integral part. Naming whiteness displaces and dislodges it from its unmarked and objective status, making the invisible, visible. The silence surrounding whiteness and its attendant racism create unjust power differentials that are invariably manifested within the CAF and experienced in problematic and, at times, violent ways among marginalized service members (George 2020; 2016).

Connecting Military Masculinity to Whiteness

Several scholars in the contemporary moment have discussed the role of masculinity in military culture (Eichler 2014; Kovitz 2000; Taber 2018). What is consistently revealed historically and in the present is the continued investment in a masculinity defined by uniformity, strength, sacrifice, and adherence to the warrior ideal and an opposition to femininity, which is often associated with weakness, difference, and diversity. While Taber (2018) argues there are multiple ways to engage in military service, there is also a dominant narrative of hypermasculinity that constructs the standard for military service and those that deviate from this standard are positioned lower on the gender hierarchy. My research on racialized soldiers’ experiences in the CAF reveals that particular racialized men were often feminized within the CAF and often struggled to adjust and adapt to the dominant CAF culture (George 2016).

Understanding how power and dominance operate requires tracing the construction of liberal whiteness and masculinity in the CAF. Jamaican philosopher Charles Mills reminds us “that the world has been foundationally shaped for the past five hundred years by the realities of European domination and the gradual consolidation of global white supremacy,” in which militaries continue to play a central role (Mills 1999, 20). The failure to interrogate how whiteness and dominance operate obscures the connections between settler colonial Canada and current forms of racial violence, making them all the more difficult to address and having serious implications for contemporary culture change efforts in the CAF. By revealing how the CAF is made white and holds its place through a variety of processes, traditions, values, training, and cultural norms that often go unquestioned, we can begin to see how military masculinity is a vehicle for maintaining the status quo and the reproduction of whiteness in often problematic and violent ways. Engaging with military masculinity and whiteness as constitutive is central to understanding how power operates and has implications for structural, symbolic, and individual change. As such, contemporary culture change efforts require looking at sites of dominance in the form of policies, procedures, processes, and everyday rituals that often remain unquestioned in order to see how military masculinity and whiteness mutually sustain one another.

A revised military masculinity that takes whiteness into consideration is by no means an easy feat, precisely because it is not separate from other Canadian institutions grappling with similar issues and their role in upholding white settler norms. The CAF, like other institutions across the Canadian landscape, is constitutive of structures of power that have enabled and legitimized the status quo. We need to challenge not only its gendered basis but also how it intersects with and sustains other structures of power. When we examine the logics that enable these forms of violence to exist with the CAF, experiences of sexual assault and/or harassment are not separate from cases of racism. Specifically, addressing whiteness means taking the lives of those on the margins seriously and attending to their ideas and recommendations for social change.

Furthermore, we must carefully engage with contemporary equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives that simply engage in performative change, ultimately leaving structures of power intact. A revised military masculinity means also thinking about masculinities and dismantling the warrior ideal that is so central to the structure of modern militaries. Finally, interrogating histories of warfare and questioning the logics of the white colonial fantasy (i.e., Canada as tolerant, diverse, and engaged in global peacekeeping) that appear neutral and benevolent but go a long way in preserving and consolidating the status quo of which white masculinity is central, must be interrogated and dismantled.

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Addressing Unhelpful Ideas about Masculinity in the Canadian Armed Forces: A Practitioner's Perspective

By Tod Augusta Scott, Bridges Centre

I work with members of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) who have abused their female partners. Often, this work requires challenging ideas about masculinity that can contribute to men's abuse of power over others. These unhelpful ideas about masculinity can lead men to feel they:

- Always need to be right or to win;
- Can never admit to making mistakes or being wrong;
- Can never ask for help;
- Need to control others;
- Should never show vulnerability;

Over the years, challenging these ideas has helped men to both stop their abuse and repair the harm they caused.

The template for supporting individual men to change is the same as that for supporting systems to change. Systemic change is often referred to as organizational or cultural change. This template to create change at the individual and systemic level draws largely on the work of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (1963; 1968).

Changing Systems

In work with individual men, I adopt a strength-based approach to conversations. Initially, I ask a man about his values and how he would prefer to act in relationships. Men often talk about valuing fair and respectful relationships, and taking responsibility for bad choices and mistakes. I then invite a man to consider various ways in which he may have lived up to these values and reflect on the skills he has for living these values.

Establishing a man's values provides the foundation for him to consider the times when he did not live up to those values. When a man realizes that his identity is not being reduced to or conflated with his bad choices or mistakes, he

is better able to face those mistakes. Furthermore, he is able to identify the unhelpful ideas about masculinity that have contributed to his behaviour. In my therapeutic conversations, men realize that admitting to making bad choices and mistakes and taking responsibility for them will not lead them to be labelled and totalized as a “perpetrator”, “abuser”, or “offender”. They understand that they do not need to be totally changed; they have values and practices that are worth saving. With this approach, I’m oriented to bring the best out of people, so they can confront their bad choices and mistakes, rather than only focusing on what is wrong with them.

Similarly, with system change, I take a strength-based approach with organizations that want to address misuses of power. With the CAF, for example, the conversations would begin with inviting leadership to articulate the values and work culture that the CAF wants to uphold. The CAF leadership would likely report wanting to promote responsible use of power over others as well as taking responsibility for mistakes and bad choices. The conversations would then explore how the CAF organization or culture promotes these ideals.

This exploration creates a foundation for leadership in the CAF to look at how their organization or work culture may not always live up to its values. With this approach, the CAF or any organization is drawn toward change because they are being invited to change to better align with their own values and ethics. Leaders in the CAF would be better able to address organizational mistakes when they know the CAF's identity is not being conflated with these mistakes. Further, CAF would be able to identify and challenge the unhelpful ideas about masculinity that can foster abuses of power. Change would be easier because CAF leadership would know they could acknowledge abuses of power—such as sexual harassment—without the entire organization being labelled or totalized as “misogynistic” or having a “rape culture.”

This approach does not assume that organizations need a total “transformation”, that the entire culture is corrupt, or that redemption is impossible. Instead, my goal is to bring the best out of the CAF so the leadership can confront their bad choices and mistakes, adequately address when members veer off track from these values, and make changes based on the organization’s values.

This approach to individual and systemic change is modelled after the template promoted by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King appealed to the values of the United States as they are reflected in the Constitution. While affirming America’s values, Dr. King invited people to consider how the country was falling short of its values. Americans felt drawn toward change because they were aware they were

changing on the basis of their own values and ethics. They felt able to change because Dr. King did not conflate America's bad choices with its identity. They were not being asked to change everything about themselves. Dr. King did not totalize America by labelling it "racist", "colonialist", or asserting that America had to be "completely transformed" and was irredeemable. Instead, Dr. King effectively appealed to America's higher values to create change.

Changing Individuals

In working with men who have abused their female partners, I want to notice their values—such as respect and taking responsibility—that are consistent with stopping abuse and repairing harm. Similarly, the CAF can encourage service members to notice positive values in each other, even when they are not always living up to them.

The CAF can caution service members not to assume the worst of their colleagues' intentions or disregard people's intentions as irrelevant. The CAF can help members understand that a person's mistakes and bad choices often do not reflect their "true values". People need to be invited to find the best in each other and then use this knowledge to foster reflection on service members' misuse or abuse of power. The CAF could encourage service members to be curious about how others' values are consistent with respect and taking responsibility even when they behave otherwise.

In my practice with men who have abused their partners, I want to engage them in the same respectful manner that I invite them to use with others. In part, because of my negative assumptions about the men I worked with, I initially took an oppositional stance in conversations—challenging and confronting men on their abusive behaviour. For years, I adopted this confrontational engagement with men, in effect, competing with them about who was right and who would win arguments, and engaging in a power struggle to make them accountable. I now see this oppositional approach was mirroring some of the same disrespectful practices I thought I was changing. Many of the men I worked with were familiar with other men being competitive with them, policing them, or confronting them. They were less familiar with a man who was caring and compassionate, and wanted to support them to be accountable and take responsibility.

Similarly, the CAF would benefit from encouraging service members to be respectful of each other, even when a service member has made bad choices or mistakes. The CAF can discourage creating a "call out culture" or "cancel culture"

or adopting campaigns that encourage mottos like “don’t be that guy” in which individuals seek out the worst in others, confront others, while also remaining unaware of their own self-righteousness and the harm their behaviour and singular focused perspective may cause.

The work of Martin Luther King Jr. demonstrated this respectful approach to social justice. King was aware of how easy it is for people to replicate the very dominating and controlling behaviour they’re fighting against. He modelled an effective strategy that allowed individuals and his government to confront their bad choices and mistakes on the basis of their positive qualities, their own values, and their own ethics.

Beyond Gender Essentialism

Gender essentialism insists that there is something distinct and innate that determines the actions of all women and all men. Often, gender essentialism contributes to people defining men as essentially powerful and in control, while defining women as essentially powerless and weak. Of course, these assumptions mirror common patriarchal stereotypes of women and men.

While it’s important to deconstruct unhelpful ideas about masculinity, efforts to reconstruct a healthy masculinity can be problematic. Defining masculinity risks implicitly defining femininity as its opposite, which can inadvertently reinforce gender essentialism. For example, if masculinity is promoted as being respectful and responsible, then is femininity defined differently? What are the values and traits that would be assigned to one gender and not the other? A far safer strategy for social change is for the CAF leadership to define unhelpful ideas about gender, masculinity, and femininity as the problem while promoting the values and characteristics that create safe and respectful relationships for individuals, citizens, service members, or workers, regardless of gender.

Efforts to address unhelpful ideas about masculinity need to include women. While the influence of these unhelpful ideas contributes to men abusing power, these ideas are circulated and supported by both women and men. Over the years, I have worked with many women who have shamed their male partners for not being “man enough”, accusing them of not making enough money or being too weak. Both women and men contribute to the problem of gender essentialism and need to be part of the solution to stopping the circulation of these unhelpful ideas about masculinity. Both women and men need to promote values that foster the culture that the CAF wants.

Conclusion

When people exclusively adopt a social justice lens, they often see only social injustice in people, institutions, and societies. They learn to see people and organizations only in terms of problems or deficits and to view complete transformation as the only solution. In this context, social justice advocates often experience appreciation for service members, the CAF, their culture, society, and country—gratitude, even patriotism—as anathema to social justice. In contrast, following Martin Luther King Jr.'s leadership, the CAF could demonstrate how gratitude, loyalty, and patriotism can provide a strong foundation from which to address social injustice.

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The Multiplicity of Masculinities: Not Just About Men and Maleness

By Walter Callaghan, University of Toronto

“Suck it up, buttercup”

“Stop pussyfooting around and get to it”

“Man up!”

For people who have served in the military, all three of these sayings likely bring back memories—memories of themselves or someone else being verbally “motivated”, incidents that tend to serve as exemplars for anyone conducting qualitative research with veterans or current-serving members of the military. The masculine, and not exactly subtle, undertones within this language easily serve as a hint at the underlying culture of the military—a culture that is frequently referred to as hypermasculine, a culture that carries all the hallmarks of being hegemonic (i.e., where norms of behaviour are dictated, frequently with the ideal being almost always unattainable) (Connell 1987; Hinojosa 2010; Messerschmidt 2019).

A simplistic reading of these sayings, and of the work on military masculinity, would infer that this is a problem about men. But it’s not just about men, nor does it apply solely to men. As an element of hegemonic organizational culture, masculinity applies to all members of the organization. All members, regardless of their sex (male, female, intersex), gender (man, woman, transgender), or sexual orientation (heterosexual or anything falling into the rubric of LGBTQ+), face continuous demands to embody and perform military masculinity. It would be erroneous to reduce masculinity to being “just a guy thing”, for masculinity does not equate simply to maleness or manhood (Connell 2005). Understanding how different individuals embody and perform masculinity is inherently important to understanding how masculinity operates within any group (Connell 1987; 2005), both positively and negatively, and why a failure to see past the simplistic correlation of masculinity with maleness contributes to the problems of correcting negative elements of that masculinity in the drive for culture change—similar to why simply expanding the organization through gender inclusion has had only limited effect on changing the culture (Duval-Lantoine 2022; Eichler 2017).

Even though military masculinity is frequently referred to as being hegemonic, being a dominant set of ideals and values to the exclusion or “othering” of

anything that does not meet its characteristics, it is not entirely hegemonic, for there are times and places where alternate forms of masculinity are not only permitted but demanded (Connell 1987; 2005; Parpart and Partridge 2014). This is most noticeable when we change our perspective in looking at the Canadian Armed Forces, when we take a starting point that the organization constitutes an organic amalgamation of several subcomponents, including branches (Air, Land, Sea), trades, and regiments (Callaghan 2022; 2023). When we look at this middle-level strata of culture, not yet going down to the behaviour of the individual members but in the local environment in which those individuals live and operate, we most easily see the multiplicity of masculinity that is known to exist even within hegemonic culture (Connell 2005; Hinojosa 2010).

When we think of military masculinity, or even about the military in general, the first images are soldiers with guns, tanks, or fighter aircraft. The militarization of general civilian culture, and the way in which both popular culture and the news media, have portrayed the military has led to this social imagination (Enloe 1989; Enloe, Lacey, and Gregory 2016). And here we face another problem, for it is this particular image of the military that reinforces some of the more negative perceptions and demonstrations of military masculinity, almost purposefully obfuscating other moments or embodiments. Historically, we have only occasionally been presented with alternatives to the “warrior”, “sharp end of the stick”, idea of the military, alternatives such as medics providing humanitarian assistance, not just in war (such as the civilian-military-cooperation [CIMIC] teams that operated in Afghanistan) but in times of natural disaster (for example: Haiti 2010, Asian Tsunami 2004). And yet these acts of caring for others provide moments where an alternate form of masculinity, one verging on being labeled as feminine, is most noticeable.

But we do not even have to go so far to see these moments. Returning to my previous comment about looking at trades, we can see an alternate form of masculinity constantly on display, embodied, and performed on a daily basis when we look at the medical trades: from nursing officers to non-commissioned medical technicians, the primary purpose of these trades is to provide care and support to the sick and injured, and to do so in all environments and under all conditions, including active combat. And yet, while this purpose, one which crosses into the realm of what could be referred to as ordinary ethics (Lambek 2010), is based on providing care (behaviour which is normally construed as feminine), these medical personnel are still all fully trained military members, who simultaneously are trained for war and embody the ideals of military masculinity. There are certainly individuals within the medical trades who perform and embody the negative forms of military masculinity, but we have

something that substantially differs from the simplistic “warrior” form of masculinity that seems to be attached to the imagination of the hegemonic military cultural ideal of masculinity, that differs primarily by incorporating it and changing it by and through the inclusion of traits stereotypically associated with femininity.

This alternate form of masculinity, one that combines the inherent violence of the imagined “warrior” along with a purpose to care for others, is not and does not have to be limited to the medical trades, for it is noticeable even within the combat arms when we look down at the level of individual behaviours and the basis of unit cohesion. From almost the first day of recruit training, we are taught about the importance of relying on each other, particularly a “battle buddy”. These close-knit relationships that are initiated and formed during the indoctrination of civilians into the military carry on throughout one’s time in service, and also play a fundamental role in post-service life for veterans. This reliance on others, and of being available to others, socially and emotionally, forms the basis of peer-support within veteran communities and purposefully uses language that evokes the concept of unit cohesion and the battle-buddy system of social behaviour and connectedness that forms its basis.

Unfortunately, it does not take much effort to find examples where this pro-social behaviour, one that is based in an ordinary ethics of care that bridges conceptualizations of femininity and masculinity, can also be altered to reinforce the negative elements of military masculinity. And it can be done by relying on notions of masculinity that make it acceptable to care for one’s own, but where that ability to care is constrained or denied to anyone outside the “in-group” (Goffman 1963). I have previously presented and written on such elements (Callaghan 2020), providing a taxonomy of sexism and associated archetypal behaviours that can help us understand why and how this happens. I would posit that these ideas can be extended beyond the scope of addressing sexual misconduct to being valuable and modifiable concepts that can assist in engaging with efforts to address many other elements of military culture and behaviour that have been bound up in or are reliant on the embodiment and performance of masculinity, including racism.

While space does not permit providing an in-depth analysis here, we need to also address another element of social behaviour and military culture that has largely escaped attention so far: the role of political ideology. While it does not take much effort to observe and note the overlap of the spectrum of political ideology onto concepts of masculinity, as well as the taxonomy of sexism and its associated behaviours (Callaghan 2020), there seems to be an almost visceral

avoidance of addressing or discussing how political ideology maps onto military masculinity in different ways. Given the vehemence with which certain public figures respond to any attempt to address how the beliefs and ideas are attached to negative social behaviour, perhaps this reluctance is well-founded, as even raising it as a point of discussion is certain to paint a target on one's back. It is also recognized that the Canadian Armed Forces and the Department of National Defence, as government organizations, do everything possible to remain non-partisan, and this is likely the primary reason why discussions about political ideology, sexism, and racism are largely avoided. But avoiding this topic, of addressing how conservative sociopolitical ideologies are directly connected to sexism, racism, and the construal of masculinity in ways that lead to its use as an abusive and negative embodied way of being, only limits the potential for not just culture change but also changing masculinity into something that can be positive instead of negative.

There are numerous examples of individuals who have adopted or modified their personal embodiment of masculinity and openly perform a masculinity that is prosocial and supportive, that cares for others, and do so while also holding true to the core ethos of the military, perhaps even performing that ethos in ways that are impossible for those who reject incorporating elements of the feminine into their way of being. And these individuals come from all trades, all genders, and all sexual orientations—this is not just about men and masculinity, nor should it ever have been reduced to such a simplistic binary.

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Operational Effectiveness and Peacekeeper Masculinity

*By Sandra Biskupski-Mujanovic,
Mount Saint Vincent University*

Militarized masculinity is privileged in military organizations, and a few scholars have looked at the process of militarizing men in the armed forces (Bulmer and Eichler 2017). The process of militarizing masculinity builds on Connell and Messerschmidt's (2005) concept of hegemonic masculinity, the "pattern of practice (i.e., things done, not just a set of role expectations or an identity) that allowed men's dominance over women to continue" (831). Hegemonic and militarized masculinities alike should be differentiated from other masculinities, especially subordinated ones. Consistent with other militaries, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has a highly masculine culture where soldiering is seen as something that is manly and mostly done by men (Lane 2017, 470). While the default soldier may no longer be a man, the ideal continues to be masculine, and women are expected to conform to this status quo (ibid., 471). Essentializing soldiers as masculine in particular militarized ways calls into question the very legitimacy of the female soldier and conflates masculinity with men and femininity with women. However, the characteristics associated with masculinity and femininity can be, and are, enacted by all genders in complex and nuanced ways that are multiple and dynamic. As gender is socially constructed and reproduced through norms and stereotypes, our understandings of masculinity and femininity can evolve. Peacekeeping, as a militarized activity undertaken by the CAF, is a unique site of feminist interrogation, as stereotypically feminine qualities are privileged over stereotypically masculine qualities due to the work often required of peacekeepers. As such, peacekeeping offers an opportunity to establish alternative masculinities.

There is a contradiction in peacekeeping where the blue beret is expected to be "benign, altruistic, neutral, and capable of conflict resolution in any cultural setting, a warrior-prince-of-peace," yet the vast majority of peacekeepers are soldiers "skilled in the arts of violence and the protection of nation and territory" (Whitworth 2004, 13). My research with Canadian servicewomen who deployed on United Nations peacekeeping operations (PKOs) reveals that many felt the need to conform to the CAF's masculine environment. However, when it comes to PKOs, Canada and the UN have relied on instrumentalist and "smart peacekeeping" logics to justify women's increased participation (Biskupski-Mujanovic 2019). This logic expects women to be better able to protect local

citizens, improve intelligence gathering, and inspire women by serving as role models (Jennings 2011). Women are also represented as a mechanism to fix the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse, by assisting victims with their “innate” compassionate responses, deterring their male colleagues from sexual violence by having a ‘civilizing’ effect on them, and lowering the overall levels of abuse committed, since women are less likely to be perpetrators (ibid., 3). In this logic, femininity is instrumentalized to counteract militarized masculinity and curb persistent problems within peacekeeping, rather than to facilitate women’s equal and meaningful participation on PKOs.

About one third of my research participants believed that women contributed something different and unique to PKOs and were valuable for the purpose of operational effectiveness. Their gendered contributions included gaining trust and access to local populations, using soft skills, prioritizing women’s issues, and acting as role models for other women and girls. One participant pointed out that “it is hypocritical to go in there with soldiers that are white, heterosexual, cis-normative men and say, ‘I can relate to you, I have empathy.’” However, how easily women chose to use traditionally feminine qualities depended on the tasks they were assigned. As one participant stated, “sometimes you are kind, sometimes not,” and another participant stipulated, “You don’t want a peaceful, nice lady on a combat mission but a peacekeeping mission, benefits from just that.” Yet another explained, “dudes that come from combat arms trades are all about closing in and destroying the enemy, and that may not be what you need to do in a peacekeeping mission where you are securing food, water, and a safe environment for NGOs to do their work.” Baruah (2017) also asks, “if compassion, empathy, and sensitivity to local populations are important in PKOs, why can’t men be compassionate, empathetic, and sensitive? Why are these seen as attributes that only women possess?”

A majority of my research participants did not agree with gendered stereotypes and the instrumentalist logic justifying women’s participation on PKOs. Further, a few participants were offended by this logic and believed that men could equally apply so-called “soft skills” to their work and that sometimes men could do it even better than women. One participant remarked, “I’m sure there are a lot of men that have a kind, gentle, compassionate approach to things as I’m sure there are a lot of women who are hardcore, very binary, not good listeners.”

Duncanson’s (2009) analysis of male peacekeepers’ autobiographies reveals a tension between warrior masculinity and the construction of an alternative masculinity associated with peacekeeping. The author links the core principles of peacekeeping (including impartiality and controlling the use of force) to

masculinity, and they link everyday “feminized” practices to soldiering (such as building friendships, drinking coffee, and chatting) (70). Maki-Rahkola and Myrntinen (2014) argue that Finnish peacekeeper masculinities include discourses of being reliable professionals and tough fighters but also “sensitive dads” (479). These men took on surrogate parenting roles towards less experienced soldiers, were active fathers who considered childcare as part of their male responsibilities, and believed that separation from their families was the hardest part of deploying. Duncanson (2009) contends that “peacekeeper masculinity remains a militarized masculinity, constructed through feminized others” (74), that concentrates power with a few elite men. However, she notes potential in peacekeeping masculinity, a masculinity that embodies both stereotypical feminine and masculine qualities, to disrupt and challenge hegemonic masculinity. Notably, she argues that we can build on constructions of peacekeeper masculinity when envisioning and constructing alternative masculinities. For this reason, operational effectiveness claims about women’s contributions to peacekeeping harm the construction of peacekeeper masculinity and other alternative masculinities, as men should see themselves enacting the same skills as women can when deployed on PKOs.

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Transforming Military Masculinity Through a Children, Peace and Security Lens

By Catherine Baillie Abidi, Ken Hoffer, and Kathryn Reeves, Mount Saint Vincent University and Dallaire Institute

Setting the Context: Children, Peace and Security

Impacted by the extreme violence perpetrated during the genocide in Rwanda, and particularly the engagement of children in the violence, Lt. General (retired) Roméo Dallaire created what is now known as the Dallaire Institute for Children, Peace and Security. The Dallaire Institute is focused on disrupting cycles of violence by challenging hegemonic masculinity and prioritizing children within the landscape of peace and security. Centering children within peace and security, shifts the focus from current manifestations of violence to a more comprehensive analysis of how violence becomes normalized and enacted intergenerationally. Transforming cultures, including military cultures, necessitates an ecological understanding of these socialization processes that begin in childhood. The Dallaire Institute argues: “Peace is possible, violence is preventable, and children must be at the heart of the solutions.” It is through this lens, that the authors share reflections on why a children, peace, and security frame is central to a revised military masculinity and cultural change within the Canadian Armed Forces.

Challenging Operational Effectiveness

The global security landscape is increasingly threatened by complex socio-economic, geo-political, and environmental factors that have severe repercussions for future peace and security. We are witnessing an increase in armed conflicts, protracted conflicts that are compounded by new complexities such as COVID-19, and an alarming rise in the engagement of children and youth by state and non-state armed groups in a multitude of asymmetric roles. These increased operational demands, domestically and internationally, have stressed the national capacity to reconstitute and sustain high-tempo operations with state-of-the-art material resources and robust numbers of well-trained personnel. In these contemporary contexts, traditional perspectives on operational effectiveness, which are laced with hegemonic or destructive masculinity, contribute to the maintenance of structural sexism, racism, and heteronormativity and are therefore limited and proving ineffectual.

“Operational effectiveness is often described as the overriding concern in the CAF” (Arbour 2022, 216). However, traditional definitions of operational effectiveness fail to respond to the shifting social and moral elements of peace and security, particularly in relation to military personnel’s increasing exposure to atrocities associated with communities, and particularly with children. Favoring hegemonic masculine characteristics such as physical strength, aggression, and stoicism to the exclusion of diverse masculine characteristics, such as empathy and cooperation, fails to adequately prepare military personnel to meet these evolving operational demands in theatre, which is resulting in feckless missions, and physical and psychological health consequences (Denov 2022). For example, while the post traumatic mental effects on veterans who witness unspeakable atrocities are well documented (Spelman et al. 2012), the moral injury that manifests in feelings of guilt, shame, and a sense of betrayal by authorities is not well understood. These health consequences are magnified when potentially morally injurious events involve women or children (Nazarov et al. 2018). Our failure to honour diverse masculine values and to understand the complex social contexts of contemporary armed conflict, including new and emerging social interactions, results in our failure to support and care for military personnel, resulting in operational ineffectiveness.

Intergenerational Militarized Masculinity

The CAF has traditionally embodied masculine traits to develop professional, well-disciplined warriors. In this context, femininity has been understood as a subordinated contrast with the emphasis on submission and empathy. While there are both constructive and destructive aspects of masculinity, documented failures in leadership that promote misogyny, sexism, harassment, hazing, bullying, and racism undermine the CAF’s professional credibility and overall operational effectiveness. These destructive forms of military masculinity also impact military culture more broadly, including military families, with some being victimized by a derogatory military ethos which is embedded in out-dated traditions and culture. These values have traditionally been unquestioned; however, feminist scholars have begun pointing to the negative influence that can be associated with destructive militarized masculinities, including undue gendered violence, neglecting mental health needs, and avoiding seeking medical attention for physical ailments (Hockey 2017).

While traditional masculine values, such as the narrative of hypermasculine warrior violence in deployment zones, may be seen to be a necessity for preparing soldiers for combat, these same values are susceptible to corruption through misguided leadership and cultural practices that can compromise the

health of military personnel and their families. Military children are at a heightened risk for embedding these destructive masculinized norms into their future lived experiences and social interactions. This pattern may be especially prominent in military children who enter service with the CAF themselves. While recruitment practices may perceive new members to be blank slates, and therefore able to be trained uniformly, those who grew up with an intergenerational understanding of destructive masculine values may continue to preserve them unintentionally. Without considering how those who keep vigil at home are responding to the cultural norms espoused by a masculinized military, we fail to prepare our CAF members for the evolving theatre of operations or the reunion with their families.

Transformative Leadership & Constructive Masculinity

The CAF is built on a longstanding commitment to honour and service (Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces 2012), an ethos that has envisioned a certain type of soldier and a particular kind of performance. These traditional values and ethics have prioritized the notion of a rugged individual, and this warrior concept has been conceived within racialized, gendered, heteronormative, and abled structures (Taber 2018). As the deeply embedded cultural violence within the CAF becomes more exposed, questions are arising about the notion of effective leadership in an increasingly complex social context.

Debates surrounding the kind of leadership that is required to transform the CAF often pits the dove against the warrior, or compassionate leadership against a more traditional authoritarian style. From the prioritization of skills and attributes identified for senior leaders to the relations of power that sustain the status quo, the lack of diversity in senior leadership and the continued reliance on outdated organizational leadership theories are resulting in repeated cycles of exclusion and tolerance for inappropriate behavior. As Arbour (2022) stated, “the value of loyalty, especially to one’s comrades and the institution, appears to frequently come into conflict with the value of integrity, as evidenced by the fact that blatant and longstanding problematic behaviours have gone unreported and unaddressed over multiple decades” (211). Effective and transformative leadership requires constructive masculine and feminine values focused on equitable relations of power and collaborative processes with communities, including children and youth, to build teams committed to peace and security that foster moral agency, critical reflexivity, and collaborative commitments to a shared peace mission.

Conclusion

Disrupting and transforming destructive or hegemonic militarized masculinity requires a deep analysis of the broader social context in which the CAF operates. This analysis must include the identification of the patterns of violence that manifest within operational and personal contexts. Enhancing our collective understanding of violence and opportunities for transforming military culture(s), requires a system-wide acknowledgement of the severity of the problems.

We propose three main areas for further consideration. Firstly, training is foundational to the adoption of norms (Terry and McQuinn 2018). **Training that disrupts structural and cultural violence, challenges destructive or hegemonic masculinity, and enhances moral agency**, is necessary to shift minds and hearts within the CAF. Individual and collective, professional, and mission-specific training can provide military personnel with contextual experience and support for constructive masculine values to enhance the likelihood of long-term success in future missions (Buick and Pickering 2013). However, training that sustains the status quo and fails to prepare personnel from a gender and culturally responsive perspective can negatively affect the individual and the mission and impact the moral and mental health of peers, family, and community.

Secondly, transformative training that challenges existing ways of knowing and doing requires **learning with diverse partners and collaborators to imagine alternative ways forward**. Arbour (2022) recommends a diversified socialization within the CAF, suggesting secondments to the private sector and other government departments as a necessary pathway for transforming culture. Given the many professional skills within the CAF, participating partners would also benefit from these collaborative opportunities. These kinds of changes need a high level of institutional commitment and strong moral leadership. Moral leadership that adopts intersectionality, engages in collaborative missions and mandates, and embraces empathy can set a normative framework for sustained peace and security.

Finally, **centering children and intergenerational impacts** within analyses of violence transformation, both in domestic and international contexts, can shift our gaze from current events and immediate security strategies to longer-term views where prevention and early intervention are explicitly prioritized. Further research exploring the impact of militarized masculinities within CAF families, understanding intergenerational cycles of violence that sustain conflict, including the increased engagement of children in armed violence, as well as the health consequences of morally challenging encounters with children during deployments, can center moral agency, violence prevention, and accountability mechanisms within peace and security.

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Applying Adult Education Theories to Understand Militarized Masculinities

By Nancy Taber, Brock University

Introduction

This report describes how educational learning paradigms can be used to understand and challenge problematic militarized masculinities in the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). It defines militarized masculinity, outlines the adult educational paradigms of technical, humanist, and critical, applying them to the context of the military, introduces situated learning theory in relation to performing militarized masculinity, and discusses how learning in the critical paradigm can assist with reimagining masculinity in the context of the CAF.

Defining Militarized Masculinity

In an effort to move away from binary gendered thinking, post-structural scholars explore the performance of masculinities and femininities as plural, intersecting, and contextually dependent (i.e., Connell 2005). As such, it is recognized that women, men, and those who do not identify within that binary can engage in masculine and feminine practices that are not tied to bodies of a specific sex. However, societally, masculinity is typically associated with men and femininity with women, with the former privileged over the latter. This is particularly true in western militaries, which were historically created by men for men with the expectation that men would serve as protectors and women would be the protected (Eichler 2016). Despite the fact that there is a multiplicity of masculinities performed by military members (Higate 2003), one form of militarized masculinity is privileged in the Canadian military: that of a warrior who is viewed as a tough, stoic, able-bodied, strong white cisgender straight man (Davis 2013; Taber 2020). Those embodying the warrior ideal value military service above all else, embrace unlimited liability and the soldier-first principle, are employed in an operational trade and with international deployment, and perceive the world as a zero-sum game in which there are winners and losers, friends and foes (Taber 2022). Those who are viewed as not fitting into this warrior ideal are organizationally marginalized.

Adult Education Paradigms, Formal Training, and the Military

Formal training and education in the military can be conceptualized from three paradigms, each with their own underlying philosophies, beliefs, and approaches (Hampson and Taber 2021):

- **Technical:** training that focuses on the performance of skills and competency-based assessment; in the military, this includes weapons training and drill exercises.
- **Humanistic:** training that focuses on understanding others and engaging in individual self-actualization; in the military, this includes ethics and leadership instruction.
- **Critical:** education that focuses on the deconstruction of societal forms of power and privilege; in the military, this would include a critique of the organization itself, with its institutionally accepted forms of oppression and violent goals.

With respect to militarized masculinities, the technical paradigm reproduces a warrior ideal, with personnel taught to conform to expectations without question. The humanistic paradigm asks personnel to consider how to become better military members, officers, and leaders, but by leaving the warrior ideal intact. The critical paradigm, however, can critique military values and ideals, thus challenging the privileging of militarized masculinities and the warrior ideal. This critical paradigm holds much potential but is not often embraced by military organizations.

Situated Learning

In addition to learning through formal training, military personnel also engage in informal situated learning, as they learn not simply skills, but what organizational norms are valued and how to conform to them (Taber 2022). Personnel learn that militarized masculinity in the form of a warrior ideal is a privileged identity. Those who are viewed as embodying this ideal are more likely to be accepted and promoted. Those who are not can still be successful, but they typically face extra scrutiny and attention in proving their worth (George 2020; Taber 2011). Any attempt to challenge this situated learning through the technical and humanist paradigms is likely to fail, as training from those paradigms does not support the critique of organizational culture, norms, or values in which militarized masculinity is embedded.

Reimagining Military Masculinity from a Critical Paradigm

Teaching and learning in the critical paradigm has much potential for reimagining military masculinities. Drawing on theories such as critical race theory, decolonial theory, intersectional feminism, queer theory, critical disability studies, and feminist antimilitarism, military personnel can learn to critique and challenge harmful ideals. While military organizations value the status quo, uniformity, tradition, hierarchy, efficiency, and measurement, the critical paradigm promotes questioning of the status quo, changing worldviews, critiquing power relations, acknowledging complexity, fostering open-endedness, and reimagining structures.

Being asked to critique something one was taught to hold dear is difficult but essential work; indeed, the most important learning often happens from a place of discomfort (hooks 1994). Working within the critical paradigm can support learners in engaging with a problem-posing approach (Freire 2000) in relation to military masculinity: What is a warrior ideal? Where did it come from? How is it learned? How do structures support it? How does it play out in everyday practice? Who does it benefit? Who does it harm? Is it needed? How can it be changed? What other forms may serve military needs? By acknowledging the validity of these questions and engaging with them, military personnel can begin to reimagine more inclusive forms of masculinity.

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Appendix A-1

Graphic Recording of Workshop 1

By James Neish, See Meaning

HOW A REVISED MASCULINITY CAN HELP FOSTER CULTURE CHANGE IN THE CAF

MSVM
JUNE 5-6, 2022

PROBLEMS WITH EXISTING NOTIONS OF MILITARY MASCULINITY

- THEY'RE TAUGHT IT'S THEIR RIGHT.
- THEY FORGET THE WORD 'TEAM.'
- CANADA IS COMPOSED OF DIVIDED CULTURES. TO MAKE THIS WORK: WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER.
- PRIVILEGE: IT'S PROBLEMATIC
- MILITARY MASCULINITY IS "EVOLVING & DYNAMIC"
- THE EASE WITH WHICH IT CAN BE SEPARATED FROM HISTORICAL STRUGGLE
- IT'S RACIALIZED & GENDERED, ABLED, HETERNORMATIVE, COLONIAL, CLASSED
↳ NOT INTERSECTIONAL
- IT'S BUILT FOR WHITE, ABLED, CISGENDERED, HETERO MEN
- IT CAN BE VIOLENT TO NON-DOMINANT GROUPS. "NOT CONFORMING HAS A COST."
- SUPPORTED BY STRUCTURAL & SYSTEMIC INEQUALITY → IT'S IN THE CULTURE.
- PEOPLE SEE IT AS THE WAY THINGS ARE BUT EVERYONE STRUGGLES TO MEET THE IDEAL.
- HERO WORSHIP ← DIFFICULTY TAKING A CRITICAL VIEW OF COLONIALISTS & HISTORY
- RUGGED INDIVIDUALISM ← CONQUERORS ON A PEDESTAL - "HIGH HORSES"
- MILITARY CULTURE REPRESSES INDIVIDUALISM & QUESTIONING AUTHORITY
- LEADERS ARE NOT LISTENING TO ADVISORY GROUPS - "TWO EARS TO LISTEN, ONE MOUTH TO SPEAK."

MASCULINITY/PATRIARCHY/HETERNORMATIVITY

CAN WE AGREE ON A DEFINITION OF MASCULINITY?

"CHANGE IS STILL REGUANT ON THE BACKS OF THE MARGINALIZED."

"FEAR OF THE WOKE"

"EDUCATION GOT US INTO THIS MESS. EDUCATION WILL GET US OUT."

MASCULINITY CAN BE LIKE A STRAITJACKET

RELATIONSHIP W/ THE MALE BODY | MASCULINE (MILITARIZED MASCULINITY) TRAITS:

STRENGTH
STOICISM
DEDICATION
"A WARRIOR" → BEING PREPARED FOR COMBAT

COURAGE
AGGRESSION
SACRIFICE

"WE TREAT HISTORY AS DOCTRINE." LIKE IT'S SACRED.

- SENSE OF BELONGING - IS YOUR DEMOGRAPHIC REFLECTED?
- GENDER NEUTRALITY - "IF YOU'RE NOT MASCULINE, YOU WON'T FIT IN!"
"WOMEN ARE NOT A MONOCULTURE."
- YOUNGER PEOPLE ARE MORE ADAPTABLE - DIFFERENT VALUES
- MILITARY RECRUITMENT TOO FOCUSED ON SPECIFIC GROUPS/CLASSES
- MILITARY FAMILY UPBRINGING REINFORCING DYSFUNCTION
- "IT NEEDS TO GO BEYOND COMMEMORATION." ← RECOGNITION/VALIDATION
- LOOK AT HISTORY FROM OTHER PERSPECTIVES

LET'S NOT SET OURSELVES UP TO FAIL → HOW TO EFFECTIVELY TRANSITION SO EVERYONE IS ON BOARD

TOGETHER EVERYONE ACCOMPLISHES MORE!

"WE ARE ALL EQUAL."

YOU NEED TO CARE.
"YOU GOTTA HAVE A HEART!"

CHANGE BEGINS AT SCHOOL.
"WHEN THEY'RE LITTLE"

WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES."

"IT'S NOT GOOD ENOUGH TO SAY THE GOVERNMENT CAN'T."

"WE CAN LEARN FROM OTHER PEOPLE'S HISTORIES."

HOW IS MASCULINITY EMBEDDED IN OUR STRUCTURES?
RANK, AWARDS, POLICIES, ETC.

WE ALL SHARE IN THIS COUNTRY'S LEGACY
IT DOESN'T JUST BELONG TO ANY ONE GROUP

Appendix A-2

Graphic Recording of Workshop 2

By James Neish, See Meaning

HOW A REVISED MASCULINITY CAN HELP FOSTER CULTURE CHANGE IN THE CAF

MSVM
JUNE 5-6, 2022

ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF MASCULINITY SERVING CULTURAL CHANGE/ SUPPORTING MILITARY PERSONNEL WELLBEING

IDENTITY IS IMPORTANT. WE PERFORM OUR IDENTITIES.
↳ THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES ABOUT OURSELVES

- WHAT ARE YOUR **VALUES**?
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS COMMON IN THE CHILHOODS OF MEN WHO COMMIT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE
- GET THE MEN TO HOLD THEMSELVES **ACCOUNTABLE** TO THEIR OWN VALUES. REACH TOWARDS YOUR BEST SELF.
- WE CAN COMPARE THE MILITARY TO PRIVATE SECURITY HOW ARE THEY HANDLING GENDER & EDI ISSUES?
- MEN NEED TO **MATURE & GROW** W/IN A CHANGED CULTURAL STRUCTURE TO **EMBODY** THOSE IDEALS.
- DAILY, WE DECIDE WHAT MASCULINITY IS THROUGH OUR WORDS & DEEDS. CAN WE REIMAGINE MASCULINITY?

"IF WE WANT TO MAKE CHANGE, WE NEED TO START WHERE WE'RE AT."

- WE NEED POSITIVE MODELS OF MASCULINITY TO EMULATE. WHAT'S WORKING?
- PEOPLE NEED OPPORTUNITIES TO MAKE MISTAKES **SAFE SPACES** TO EXIST TO LEARN

- THE MILITARY SENDS MIXED MESSAGES AROUND FAMILY VALUES, SENDING THE MESSAGE THAT IT'S PRO-FAMILY BUT ALSO PENALIZING PEOPLE FOR PRIORITIZING THEIR FAMILIES. "WHAT ARE WE FIGHTING FOR?"
- "WE ARE CONFLATING MEN & MASCULINITY." IT'S NOT THE SAME THING! "YOU'RE NEVER 100%. JUST ONE OR THE OTHER." IT'S A SPECTRUM.
- LET'S STOP CONFLATING MASCULINITY WITH POWER, AUTHORITY, & SUPREMACY!
- LEADERSHIP AS CARING VS. AUTHORITARIAN LEADERSHIP "EVERYONE SHOULD BE OPEN TO HEARING OTHERS' STORIES."
- "NASTY MILITARY ERRORS" MADE AROUND BINARY MODEL THINKING WE NEED MORE NUANCED CONVERSATIONS!
- WE NEED **GOOD MENTORSHIP** → LEARNING **POWER DYNAMICS & GIVING UP POWER**
- VIEW **GENDER STRUCTURES** & THEIR CONNECTIONS TO **RANK & AUTHORITY** → INSTITUTIONAL VS. INDIVIDUAL
- **DEFINE** WHAT IS 'MASCULINE' & 'FEMININE' - "WHAT IS IT NOT?"
- **ANTI-VIOLENCE TRAINING**
- **ALYSHIP** → PEOPLE IN POWER ACTUALLY INITIATING & ENACTING CHANGE
 - **HOMOSOCIALITY** ← THREATENED BY FEMININE 'INTRUSION'
CHALLENGE TRADITIONAL ROLES & PERSPECTIVES → **TOXIC MASCULINITY**
- WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE BIASES OF THE PEOPLE IN CHARGE
 - **WHAT IS THE FEAR ABOUT?**
IS IT REALLY ABOUT COMBAT CAPABILITY OR THE LOSS OF AUTHORITY?
- **FOCUSING ON INDIVIDUAL ACCOUNTABILITY, DRAWS FOCUS AWAY FROM INSTITUTIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY**
 - **"THERE IS AN OPPORTUNITY HERE FOR AN EVOLUTION."**

"THE MILITARY IS DEEPLY GENDERED."
MASCULINITY AS AN INSTITUTIONAL POSITION & EXPRESSION OF AUTHORITY BEYOND THE MILITARY

Appendix A-3

Graphic Recording of Workshop 3

By James Neish, See Meaning

How a Revised Masculinity Can Help Foster Culture Change in the CAF MSVM JUNE 5-6, 2022

BEST PRACTICES: IMPLEMENTING ALTERNATIVE MODELS OF MASCULINITY

"INSTITUTIONS ARE TRYING TO DIVERSIFY ON STERIODS!"

"IN THE MILITARY, WE HAVE NO POWER EXCEPT THE POWER TO HAVE A DISCUSSION." NO MECHANISMS OF VOICE"



MASCULINITIES
MANY VERSIONS

- WE HAVEN'T PROPERLY TRAINED MILITARY LEADERS ON RACE RELATIONS OR UPDATED SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES "CHANGE IS VERY UNCOMFORTABLE."
- CONSERVATIVE VALUES IN THE MILITARY IS THERE ROOM FOR CHANGE?
- A TRC MODEL: ADDRESS WRONGS IN THE PAST

EDUCATION

- TECHNICAL PARADIGM - SKILLS
- HUMANISTIC PARADIGM - ETHICS, LEADERSHIP
- CRITICAL PARADIGM - CRITIQUE VALUES, IDEALS, STRUCTURES

"YOU NEED TO CHALLENGE THE NORMS"

- THE FOCUS HAS BEEN ON PEOPLE - BUT WE NEED TO LOOK AT THE INSTITUTIONS/ENVIRONMENTS THAT THEY ARE IMMERSSED IN.
- "PROTECTION AROUND PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE" ← RESISTANCE TO CHANGE
- THE MILITARY HAS AN INSULATED WORLD VIEW ← HEGEMONIC SYSTEMS ← NARRATIVES THAT JUSTIFY THE STATUS QUO
- AGENTIC VS. COMMUNAL
AGGRESSIVE EMPATHY
COMPETITIVE AUTHENTICITY
DETERMINED VULNERABILITY
- SOCIAL NAVIGATION CREATING IDENTITY - TRADITIONALLY, THE MILITARY CULTURE DISCOURAGES INDIVIDUALISM

DEFENSE SHOULD CREATE A DEFENSE IDENTITY ← WHO ARE WE? LOOK AT HEALTH PROFESSION AS AN EXAMPLE!

INCLUSION - CAN YOU BRING YOURSELF TO WORK?

"BECOMING MILITARY w/out LOSING YOURSELF"

"REBRANDING WHAT IT MEANS TO BE CANADIAN"

WE KEEP DEFAULTING TO A BINARY MODEL! HOW ELSE CAN WE VIEW THIS?

ENCOURAGE JOURNALING ← SELF-REFLECTION

- FULL-TIME VS. MODULAR TRAINING
- CONSIDER THE AGE & DEV'T LEVEL - LIMINAL STATES & RITES OF PASSAGE
↳ LET'S CONSTRUCT THESE IN A DIFFERENT WAY.
- CADETS NEED IMMERSION IN CIVILIAN ENVIRONMENTS/VALUES
CIVILIANIZING - MAKE IT A MANDATORY CHAPTER IN TRAINING

OUR LEADERS ARE OPERATING ON OUTDATED SOCIAL MODELS.

OLD NARRATIVES:

- SERVICE BEFORE SELF
- I WORKING IDENTITY
- LEADERS IN CHARGE
- THE TEAM ABOVE ALL
- I DON'T SEE RACE!

WE NEED UPDATED: VOCABULARY & PRACTICES

"THEY KNOW THE ART OF WAR ... BUT KNOW NOTHING ABOUT TALKING TO SOMEONE WHO DOESN'T LOOK LIKE THEM."

"WE ARE RECRUITING CHILDREN."

WHAT DOES A GOOD CANADIAN LOOK LIKE? WHAT ARE THEIR VALUES? WHO DESIRES?

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES HAVE BEEN REACTIVE, NOT PROACTIVE

WHEN MILITARY MASCULINITY FAILS, WHAT HAPPENS?

↳ WHAT QUESTIONS DO WE NEED TO KEEP ASKING? HOW DO WE MEASURE SUCCESS? ← VIEW OUR FAILURES AS A PROCESS OF MAKING CHANGES

"YOU NEED THE COURAGE OF CONVICTION"

THE INSTITUTION HAS PUT TOO MUCH EMPHASIS ON INDIVIDUAL RESILIENCE
"YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY PAYING ATTENTION TO THE PEOPLE WHO ARE SUFFERING."

MILITARY MASCULINITY HAS PUT US IN THIS POSITION: "WE FEAR FAILURE,"
"THERE WILL BE A CLASS ACTION ON HOW THE CAF HAS FAILED US ON MENTAL HEALTH."

Appendix B

Annotated Bibliography on Militarized Masculinities *By Kathryn Reeves, Mount Saint Vincent University*

Christensen, Ann-Dorte, and Morten Kyed. 2022. "From Military to Militarizing Masculinities." *NORMA: Nordic Journal For Masculinity Studies* 17(1): 1–4. doi:10.1080/18902138.2022.2028428

This special issue introduction by Christensen and Kyed (2022) highlights how the social institution of the military constructs a view of masculinity that centers warfare and violence, viewing it as a historical arena that “turns boys to men” (1). Grounded in previous literature, such as that by American feminist scholar Cynthia Enloe, Christensen and Kyed note that masculine values espoused by military institutions often serve as a cultural ideal for what it means to be a man. Due to this masculine influence, the authors argue that the armed forces are “the most important arena for defining hegemonic masculinity” (2). It is therefore vital to consider the ways in which militarized masculinities are influencing not just active serving members, but also veterans and civilians (e.g., family members) who have been exposed to the masculinized culture. Furthermore, while there are those who challenge the influence of militarized masculine traits, there remain difficulties in integrating new constructions of identity that would allow more feminized traits to flourish. Although current academic research has started to challenge the masculinized ideals that the military may espouse, there remain multitude of arenas in which militarized masculinities continue to thrive unchallenged. It is therefore vital that consideration be paid to institutions which reproduce militarized values (e.g., politics, Hollywood films, and book markets).

Duncanson, Claire. 2009. "Forces for Good? Narratives of Military Masculinity in Peacekeeping Operations." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 11(1): 63–80. doi:10.1080/14616740802567808.

Duncanson argues that the construction of militarized masculinity and the emphasis on creating a model of warriors that relies on masculinized traits have led feminists to critique the use of the military in peacekeeping missions. Through analyzing autobiographical accounts by soldiers involved in peacekeeping missions, Duncanson explores how they reconstruct militarized masculinities into a “peacekeeping masculinity” (64) to fit into peacekeeping

mandates that typically require minimal use of force. Peacekeeping missions may contradict the masculinity of soldiers trained for combat, which was evident in the autobiographical memories Duncanson examined. Soldiers indicated an internal tension between the “desire to do what they learned to be most effective in bringing about peace and the desire or demand to be manly” (68). Although peacekeeping masculinities may allow for more traditionally feminized traits to be displayed by military members (e.g., building friendships with locals, humanizing oneself and others), there remains a lack of attention towards women, demonstrating the unwillingness to challenge hegemonic masculinity practices. These practices allow for masculinized identities to be placed ahead of feminized traits, positioning women and non-conforming individuals as victims or objects (72). Therefore, although there is a shift from militarized masculinities towards peacekeeping masculinities, military members are still adopting and perpetuating practices that rely on the construction of ideal and masculine soldiers, while viewing feminized individuals as others. Of additional importance, Duncanson highlights the use of Westernized military masculinities in contrast to the masculinity presented by local soldiers during deployments. Narratives examined by Duncanson highlight the ‘othering’ of local soldiers, who were perceived as aggressive, irrational, and violent (73). This view then positions Western peacekeeping masculinity as civil, controlled, and intelligent (73). Constructing peacekeeping masculinity as a contrast to the masculinized traits displayed by local militaries creates and validates traditions of colonization, placing Western views ahead of cultural context.

Eichler, Maya. 2014. “Militarized Masculinities in International Relations.” *Brown Journal of World Affairs* 21(1): 81–93.

Drawing on literature that critically evaluates the prevailing culture of militarized masculinity, Eichler asks three primary questions: How should we conceptualize the relationship between masculinity and militarism, what outcomes can be better understood through the militarized masculinity framework, and how can the culture resulting from militarized masculinity be transformed or demilitarized? Militarized masculinities, produced both within individuals, society, and institutions, influences and is strengthened through a broad range of sectors, including government agencies, peacekeeping missions, military institutions, and the media. Eichler argues that the social construction of militarized masculinity can be understood as specific to the context; therefore, it needs to be understood as an evolving power relation. Through understanding militarized masculinities contextually, we can better appreciate that masculinity is not inherently militaristic. Instead, it is a social construction of institutions that

center militarized masculinities, often in opposition to femininities, creating unequal power relations. This is further illustrated through three examples Eichler uses (the Russian-Chechen wars, the privatization of security as demonstrated in US-led wars, and the historical disassociation of women with combat) to establish different relations of inequality arising from militarized masculinity. Eichler then describes two approaches scholars are using to disentangle militarization and masculinity. The first approach aims to reduce the hierarchical system of gender norms in military service. One way this can be done is by transforming definitions of service activities, such as developing what would be entailed in a 'peacekeeper' masculinity, through the utilization of a feminist perspective. Eichler continues to add that it is not sufficient only to redefine masculinity in the military; it is also essential to demilitarize masculinity in general. This approach would necessitate remaking masculinity norms across social, political, and economic life. The second strategy Eichler describes in this article is re-envisioning international relations. This strategy seeks to address society to uproot the deep-seated assumptions that masculinized militarized violence is inevitable.

Fox, John, and Bob Pease. 2012. "Military Deployment, Masculinity and Trauma: Reviewing the Connections." *Journal of Men's Studies* 20(1): 16–31. doi:10.3149/jms.2001.16.

In this literature review, Fox and Pease examine the limitations of our conventional understanding of trauma as it relates to experiences of veterans. Arguing that failing to consider the social and cultural influences, particularly those of militarized masculinity, Fox and Pease point to the importance of creating models of masculinity that allow veterans to discuss and reconnect with others in addressing symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Although researchers and medical clinicians have continued to devote considerable attention to PTSD, Fox and Pease note that this research typically has considered symptoms as individual characteristics resulting from deployment experiences instead of considering the impact of broader social influences. The construction of masculinized traits in military members is especially important to examine, as these constructions have a long history of informing the context of deployment-related trauma experiences (17). These individualized views of trauma posit that it takes unusual and remarkable external influence to change a person. However, feminist scholars have demonstrated that internal influences and cultural norms are vital considerations for the construction and manifestation of trauma-related disorders such as PTSD. The construction of militarized masculinities is based on conforming to a

"mastery over one's body, and external objects" (20) manifested through limiting expressions of pain, demonstrations of violence, commitment to hierarchy, and an emphasis on self-control. Fox and Pease emphasize that although the traditional medical language of PTSD may allow some veterans to seek treatment by framing symptoms as a result of external circumstances and not internal 'weakness', it limits veterans' capacity to adequately reflect on their internal experiences. Failing to consider the social and cultural narratives arising from a culture of militarized masculinities may leave veterans unable to access support services that would most benefit them. Adapting our understanding of the intersection of military service and idealized masculine values is vital for learning about how veterans frame and respond to treatments for trauma-related symptoms.

George, Tammy. 2020. "Troubling Diversity and Inclusion: Racialized Women's Experiences in the Canadian Armed Forces." *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 41(2): 42-56.

In this article, George utilizes qualitative interviews with racialized servicewomen in the CAF to examine the efficacy of contemporary diversity and inclusion initiatives. Although the CAF has increased attention towards inclusion practices, they often fail to consider intersectional identities. Instead, they focus on demographic representations that negate the consideration of cultural or lived experiences among marginalized members (43). Racialized women, in particular, are often ignored in explorations of military cultural change. The intersectional analysis provided by George critically examines the role of racialized masculinity practices within the CAF. The dominant discourse of women in the CAF surrounds the tension between feminized traits and the ideal warrior. However, the intersecting role of ethnicity and race persists. Racialized women in military environments are subjected to the white male gaze, which undermines their ability to perform military service effectively through the construction of homogenous ideals. Without considering intersectional identities, the CAF fails to address and name issues of racism or sexism.

Lane, A. 2017. "Special Men: The Gendered Militarization of the Canadian Armed Forces." *International Journal* 74(4): 463-483.

Examining the process of remilitarization that the CAF has engaged in post 9/11, Lane explores how the Canadian military has continued to value masculinized traits despite pushing a narrative that the institution is gender neutral. The gendered process in the CAF, Lane argues, has "broader societal consequences"

(482) that are vital for researchers and policy makers to better understand. One example Lane uses is the masculine emphasis within Canadian special forces units. Members of Canadian special force units are viewed as “exceptionally fit, strong, intelligent, and resourceful individuals” (480), allowing them to hold a place of power and privilege within the CAF, influencing Canadian perceptions of what constitutes an effective soldier. These units have a marked disparity between male and female soldiers, often excluding females due to a misconception that female bodies are “smaller, slower, ‘weaker’ than male bodies” (479). Lane notes that while military institutions recruit both males and females for special forces units, the physical standards expected by prospective recruits are often modified to “effectively prevent the participation of women” (479), despite research that demonstrates that the feminized values and mental evaluations that women soldiers bring to missions as immensely beneficial to operational effectiveness. This exclusion then contributes to a trickle-down effect that sees women in diminished roles throughout the CAF, and the public service more generally. One way this has been demonstrated is through programs such as the 2015 Veterans Hiring Act introduced by the Conservative government, which sought to prioritize veterans with combat experience for civil service jobs. As the majority of combat roles remain allocated to men, women veterans remain on the sidelines of social awareness.

Razack, Sherene. 2004. "Masculinities That Make the White Nation." *In Dark Threats & White Knights: The Somalia Affair, Peacekeeping, and the New Imperialism*, 57-67. University of Toronto Press.

In this chapter, titled “Masculinities That Make the White Nation”, Razack opens by pointing to the societal belief that violence within the armed forces is often considered a “response to a legitimate external threat” (57). This perception allows for those who engage in combat to externalize the accepted militarized masculine values through acts of exerting power (e.g., anger and rage as motivators for aggression) towards those who are deemed to be the enemy. Razack suggests that in order to “denaturalize” (57) these values, it is essential to consider the colonial context in which Western peacekeeping missions are centered. When soldiers are deployed to peacekeeping missions, they may embody a sense of self and nation that depends on a hierarchy of dominance, with those who are seen to be ‘others’ (e.g., sexual and racial minorities) occupying a lower rung. Through relating these concepts to pre-existing literature, Razack encourages the reader to make connections between modern militarized masculine practices and historical works. One such example is Razack’s connection to a two volume text by Klaus Theweleit (*Male Fantasies*),

in which she reflects that the fascists described in the text “long for the softness, warmth, sensuality, and pleasure of the feminine but experience a profound terror that to give in to ‘the women within’ is to lose control” (59). In this way, Theweleit and Razack’s work intertwines to suggest that viewing masculine traits as the dominant and operationally effective mechanism for success creates the inability for feminized traits to be utilized efficiently. It is important for modern peacekeepers to consider the ways in which the masculinized and colonized ideal have influenced the perceptions that we have towards any group who does not adhere to those values, particularly as peacekeeping missions are often with the context of African countries that consist of their own traditions.

Shields, Duncan M., David Kuhl, and Marvin J. Westwood. 2017. “Abject Masculinity and the Military: Articulating a Fulcrum of Struggle and Change.” *Psychology of Men & Masculinity, Health Implications of Masculinity Within Military Populations* 18(3): 215–25. doi:10.1037/men0000114.

Shields and colleagues highlight the underutilization of mental health services in Canadian male military members, pointing towards the masculine gender norms that are prominent in military populations throughout all stages of military involvement. Using qualitative and narrative data from interviews with 15 Canadian veterans, Shields et al. hypothesize that dissonance in identity is a primary theme in mental health and adjustment challenges in the CAF. In particular, Shields and colleagues note that while the CAF continues to emphasize a “traditional” form of masculinity, citing the need to prepare soldiers for combat as a primary justification (215), a stereotype of “strong-but-silent” masculinity becomes a prominent marker of the culture that permeates the armed forces (216). This cultural pressure encourages soldiers to detach from emotional and physiological responses to pain or fear, favouring instead a message that soldiers must “suck it up, and soldier on” (216). While Shields et al. note the benefits of this militarized masculinity, primarily the value of group identity and a reduction of emotional responses that could damage troop morale, they also note the associated challenges for veterans and serving members to implement mental health support. The data collected by Shields et al. indicates that favouring a culture that promotes the current dominant form of militarized masculinity requires serving members to deny parts of themselves that may not fit into the pre-determined model constructed by gendered norms and historical practices. The literature further illustrates this point, demonstrating that the masculinized norms shaping military culture are created and maintained through repeated invocation and repudiation. This process may result in perceptions of the cultural norm being guarded against and in which

CAF members must continually prove compliance with militarized masculine standards. In examining the veterans' narratives about their mental health through a lens of gender socialization, four primary themes emerged, such as the struggle against abject identity, the quest for affirmation of 'fitness' and 'belonging' by a community of peers, the colonization of the therapy space with masculine 'culturally-safe' metaphors, and the reaffirmation of personal agency in a modified parallel gender meaning structure. Participants described mental health and adjustment-related difficulties as a personal failure to comply with the militarized masculinity norms. Shields and colleagues point out the potential for adverse outcomes when CAF members seek mental health treatments, which may be perceived to be in conflict with the gendered norms of the military. This study indicates that a potential solution to this barrier is creating therapeutic spaces that adjust the framing, language, and metaphors used to become more culturally appropriate for members who conform to masculine military norms. Veterans in this study seemed to value therapeutic spaces that allowed them to identify with respected peers, allowing them to collaborate in building parallel meanings to their struggles.

Taber, Nancy. 2018. "After Deschamps: Men, Masculinities and the Canadian Armed Forces." *Journal of Military, Veteran, and Family Health* 1(4), 100-107. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jmvfh.2017-0005>

In this article, Taber examines the implications of the Deschamps report (2015), that provided an external review of the sexualized culture within the CAF. The Deschamps report, conducted by former Supreme Court Justice Marie Deschamps, found a prevalent sexualized culture within the CAF, leading to a high prevalence of sexual harassment and violence. Taber notes that the prevalence of sexual harassment is associated, in part, with the gendered masculinized culture that serves to marginalize members who do not conform to a prescriptive warrior archetype (101). While empirical support indicates that gendered experiences do not exist on a binary of men and women, the CAF has maintained a culture that highlights binary oppositions as an indicator of operational effectiveness (e.g., masculinized as synonymous with a warrior and feminized as synonymous with weakness or vulnerability). This hypermasculine approach allows sexual harassment and sexual assault to be perpetrated against marginalized members (such as women or members of the LGBTQ community) while also creating a barrier to reporting (102). Taber notes that while the expression of militarized masculinity is misaligned, the capabilities and skill sets of military members are not in question. Therefore, it is the associations of masculinity as a precursor to effectiveness that are perpetuated as meaningful,

creating a false belief in the positive correlation. Taber agrees with Deschamps that culture change is vital for the future of the CAF (104). Policies, operational plans, and educational programs must align with the mission of constructing a military culture that is not dependent on a privileging of masculinized values.

Tait, Victoria. 2020. "Regendering the Canadian Armed Forces." *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice / Études Critiques Sur Le Genre, La Culture, et La Justice* 41(2): 9–25.

Utilizing a critical feminist lens, Tait explores theories of re-gendering the Canadian military through a secondary analysis of her 2018 qualitative study consisting of 17 semi-structured interviews with regular and reserve force members. Tait explores whether organizations that have traditionally relied on a masculinized military, such as the CAF, can be transformed to achieve a "more peaceable international system" (11). This question is centred on the awareness that CAF members are, at an increasing frequency, being deployed to humanitarian and peacekeeping missions that benefit from utilizing feminized traits such as empathy and equality. Tait's research helps demonstrate the unique ways women contribute to operational effectiveness through direct interactions with their communities (17) and interactions with other CAF members (17). The data collected by Tait suggests that attitudes toward marginalized groups, such as women, are shifting in a positive direction. This was reflected in most participants responding positively to questions about attitudes towards women in the military, the importance of gender awareness in the CAF, and support for expanding gender perspectives in the theatre of operation. Tait suggests that this shifting of attitudes among CAF members provides a promising direction for the organization's culture. The erosion of the masculinized warrior is making way for more fluid interpretations of what makes for effective CAF members. These revised gender interpretations allow for feminized and masculinized traits to be viewed equally instead of through a hierarchical lens. However, Tait acknowledges that although the trends identified in this study demonstrate a hopeful transitional period for the CAF, it is vital that the process be consistently reviewed and analyzed in order to identify and address future challenges as they arise.

Wegner, Nicole. 2021. "Helpful Heroes and the Political Utility of Militarized Masculinities." *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23(1): 5–26. doi:10.1080/14616742.2020.1855079.

In this article, Wegner explores how the mobilization of militarized masculinities

is used to justify the use of force enacted by Canadian military members. Wegner points out that militarized masculinities are not a static concept but instead are traits that become idealized and actively reproduced. These traits may include characteristics such as strength, toughness, and aggression that are idealized in Western culture as being "signifiers of 'manliness'" (8). While military organizations prioritize the creation of warriors by emphasizing these masculinized traits, the CAF has further encased members in the trope of "helpful heroes" (6). Peacekeeping models may challenge some elements of a militarized masculine culture, emphasizing "impartiality, sensitivity, compassion, and empathy" (9-10). However, as Wegner points out, the perceived feminization of these traits may frustrate serving members who wish to uphold the current military culture and values. Using the context of the 2001–2014 Afghanistan War, Wegner illuminates how Canadian soldiers rely on an international acceptance of militarized masculinities to justify violence while maintaining a public image of peacekeeping. In exploring the official representations of the Canadian military during their engagement with the Afghanistan War, Wegner utilizes a discourse analysis to identify and analyze themes to argue that the war was used, in part, to "bolster Canada's warrior credibility" (11). This curated image included media portrayals that showcased Canadian soldiers involved in peacekeeping tasks while carrying weaponry and dressed in tactical gear, signifying the warrior's potential without the need for explicit violence. This approach masculinized what may otherwise be perceived as feminized activities by signifying readiness for combat. This portrayal, then, works to obscure the implications of the CAF's use of violence and the impact of violence on the health and well-being of the Afghan population, curating a version of politically accepted and useful militarized masculinity.

Whitworth, Sandra. 2004. "Militarized Masculinities and Blue Berets." *In Men, Militarism & UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*, 151-182. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.

In the chapter "Militarized Masculinities and Blue Berets", Whitworth explores the complicated relationship between peacekeepers and militarized masculinities. Noting that military nations who deploy members to peacekeeping missions often create their military to adhere to strict hierarchical organization, prioritizing violence (151), Whitworth challenges the dominant narrative of militarized masculinity as interchangeable with effective peacekeeping. Highlighting the notion of "peace" in peacekeeping, Whitworth explores how the creation of modern soldiers involves messages and myths which prioritize violence, manliness, and heteronormative indoctrinations as the foundation for training

passed on from soldier to soldier (153).). This reliance on myths connecting soldiers to violent masculine identities can have broad implications for the nations to which soldiers deploy, where male aggressive behaviour becomes normalized to the detriment of civilian women or children. Whitworth suggests that rather than viewing masculinities and femininities as dichotomous, we should consider that “there is no single masculinity or femininity but rather multiple masculinities and femininities” (154) which can be used in different combinations to advance our social and cultural practices. Particularly important in peacekeeping contexts, the integration of feminized traits allows for a cohesive application of peacekeeping principles to operations. These alterations to military values will allow for new recruits, who are often young, to replace the “hegemonic representation of idolized norms of masculinity [...] the tough, stoic, emotionless warrior” (172) with a version of soldiering that allows for care and connection to others.



SICEMA

CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION AND
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT IN MILITARY AFFAIRS

