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BEYOND PONYTAILS, PANTYHOSE AND PUMPS: KEEPING WOMEN'S EQUALITY ON THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES AGENDA

Lieutenant-Commander Kenna Turcotte

JCSP 45

Exercise Solo Flight

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INTRODUCTION

In early April 2019, a Canadian Forces General Message (CANFORGEN) was released detailing changes to the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) Dress Instructions specific to women's service dress.¹ This garnered much celebration by CAF members who express their gender as women, as it signaled a change towards greater inclusion within the organization. The changes included allowing women to wear their hair in ponytails, when it previously had to be tied into a neat bun or braids.² The requirement to wear pantyhose (nylons) with a skirt was removed.³ Moreover, the requirement to wear pumps (footwear) of a certain height specification was adjusted to allow for the wearing of flat shoes with a skirt.⁴ These changes have made room for women to express themselves as women within an organization that has promoted idealized forms of masculinity and femininity for some time; however, there are still a number of gender perspectives that need to be addressed beyond ponytails, pantyhose and pumps.

The danger, however, with issues that garner much attention such as women's equality, particularly since the implementation of the Liberal government feminist agenda in 2015, is that they can often be received with a degree of institutional fatigue. Colloquially referred to as 'gender fatigue' within the institution, is the process where individuals and groups feel that 'women's' or 'gender' problems have received too much attention and that it is time to move on to other, more important, agenda items. In the case of women's equality, all efforts must be made

¹ CANFORGEN 048/19 – CMP 030/19 011939Z APR 19, Changes to CAF Dress Instructions Specific to Women's Service Dress, accessed on 19 April 2019, https://mobile.caf-fac.ca/canforgens/page.php?path=data%2F2019%2F048-19_e.asp.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

to ensure that this institutional objective does not fall off the agenda, especially when there are a number of systemic barriers to inclusion that still need to be addressed.⁵ But how do these ideas end up on the agenda to begin with, and how do we keep them from getting scrapped? This paper focuses on agenda setting theory to answer these questions. It posits that present day policy entrepreneurs can glean lessons from the last 30 years of experience with women's integration in the CAF to frame the policy problems that still remain and keep gender equality on the agenda.

Much of the literature with respect to women's equality in the CAF focuses on identifying continued barriers to inclusion across all levels of the institution; however, very little focuses on the forces that influence whether this problem gets taken up in CAF policy agenda, maintains stamina or slips off. This essay first draws upon historical literature about the evolution of women's equality in the CAF in order to paint a picture of how this problem came to be taken up on to the agenda in the first place. The focus then shifts to the extent to which the problem has been addressed, and whether gender equality should remain on the agenda. Drawing from the research presented in this paper, it will become evident that the full inclusion of women in the CAF has yet to occur; therefore, this problem must remain prominent on the agenda. The remainder of the paper will focus on what will be required to keep women's equality in the CAF on the agenda, with the goal of instituting lasting change. It will determine who the policy entrepreneurs might be and how they will ensure these issues remain front and center in the years to come. Lastly, this paper identifies possible forces that might influence gender equality to fall

⁵ A number of scholars have contributed essays focused on barriers to women's inclusion in the CAF in the collected volume *Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues*. In particular, Karen Davis, a prominent scholar in the field, addresses both the social and cultural barriers preventing women from full inclusion in combat roles: see Karen D. Davis and Brian McKee, "Women in the Military: Facing the Warrior Framework", in *Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006), 52-76.

off the CAF agenda and suggests strategies that could be employed to prevent this from occurring.

Definitions

A number of terms are used in discussions centered on women's equality, such as gender, equality, equity, inclusion, integration, assimilation, intersectionality and diversity. These are employed alone, and in combination, using various interpretations depending on context, actors and audiences. This paper places due regard to the gender agenda, which includes men, women boys and girls; however, the scope of this paper is limited to a focus on women's experiences and perspectives in the CAF. It is not suggesting that the realm of gender, equity and equality is limited to CAF women, it is merely focused on the challenges related to keeping conditions particular to those who identify as women on the CAF agenda. As such, the term *women's equality* is used throughout this paper as the overarching term related to the full inclusion of women in the CAF. It is important to note that in this context equality refers to 'equality of opportunity';⁶ it does not mean "that women become the same as men. Equality means that one's rights or opportunities do not depend on being male or female".⁷ Let us now shift our focus to how women's equality made it onto the agenda in the first place.

Agenda Setting History

The question of how a government sets its policy priorities – often referred to as its policy "agenda" – has become an important question for political scientists. One of the most important theoretical contributions was made by John Kingdon, a political scientist who developed a theory of how a few policies actually achieve top priority for governments. Kingdon

⁶ Canada. Royal Commission on the Status of Women. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa: 1970), xii.

⁷ Canada. Global Affairs Canada, *Policy on Gender Equality*, accessed 28 April 2019. <https://international.gc.ca/world-monde/funding-financement/policy-politique.aspx?lang=eng> .

focused on the stage of the policy making cycle just before the stage of decision making, which he and others called agenda setting.⁸ This stage is devoted to the complexity and dynamics of how individual policy items get the attention of government so that they are seriously considered as options in the subsequent decision-making stage of the policy cycle.⁹ After extensive research on the rise and fall of items on the agenda, Kingdon concluded that the agenda setting process involves “highly fluid and loosely coupled streams – problems, policies, and politics – [that] seem to flow through and around the federal government largely independent of one another, and big policy changes occur when the streams join.”¹⁰ The *problem stream* refers to salient public issues that require governmental action; the *policy stream* consists of viable solutions to problems, which are conceptualized by policy analysts and experts, and the *political stream* refers to the political environment and the turnover of elected officials.¹¹ When a “coupling” of at least two of the three streams, but ideally all three streams, occurs, policy windows open.¹² ‘Policy entrepreneurs’ can then quickly gain momentum to join all three streams together in order to move an idea from the ‘primeval soup’ of floating ideas firmly onto the decision agenda.¹³

The women’s equality agenda can be analyzed through this lens to help understand the conditions that led to the issue being at the forefront of the Canadian government agenda over various periods of time. To do this, those key details from the historical record on women’s

⁸ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies* (Boston: Longman, 2011), 3.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 4.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, xix.

¹¹ John Kingdon, *Agendas...*, 20.

¹² *Ibid.*, 172-173.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 116.

equality initiatives in the CAF that are particularly relevant to Kingdon's problem, policy and political streams will be highlighted in order to illuminate the agenda setting process.¹⁴

The Problem Stream

Kingdon argues that "there is a difference between a problem and a condition", that conditions, such as being hard of hearing, only become problems when we decide to do something about them.¹⁵ Political scientist, Deborah Stone, builds on this assertion in her work on the politics of policymaking, where she devotes much of her research to determining how problems come to be seen as problems in the first place. In essence she examines how conditions or "situations come to be seen as caused by humans and amenable to human intervention".¹⁶ Stone asserts that these situations only come to be viewed as policy problems through framing efforts that attribute cause, blame and responsibility to agents deemed responsive to policy action.¹⁷ The way in which these problems are framed have a direct bearing on which idea will guide the selection of policy alternatives and who is assigned responsibility to solve the problem.¹⁸

Stone proposes that there are two primary frameworks for interpreting the world, the natural, where occurrences are undirected and unguided, and the social, where events are understood to be the result of will.¹⁹ The distinction between actions that have purposes and those that do not, and the distinction between effects that are intended and those that are unintended, are crucial in politics.²⁰ Using these two distinctions, Stone has created a framework

¹⁴ A starting point for conducting research into the history of women in the CAF is the Canadian War Museum, accessed 24 April 2019, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/search/?q=women>.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 109

¹⁶ Deborah A. Stone, "Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas," *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 281.

¹⁷ Deborah A. Stone, "Causal Stories...", 282.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 283.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 284.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

for describing causal stories in politics. She identifies four types of casual theories: mechanical, intentional, inadvertent and accidental – and concludes that causal politics are primarily concerned with shifting interpretations of an issue from the dimension of accident to one of the three dimensions of control, namely, mechanical, intentional or inadvertent (see Table 1).²¹

TABLE 1
Types of Causal Theories

		Consequences	
		Intended	Unintended
Actions	Unguided	MECHANICAL CAUSE intervening agent machines trained animals brainwashed people	ACCIDENTAL CAUSE nature weather earthquakes machines that run amok
	Purposeful	INTENTIONAL CAUSE assault oppression conspiracies that work programs that work	INADVERTENT CAUSE intervening conditions unforeseen side effects neglect carelessness omission

Source: Deborah A. Stone, “Causal Stories and the Formation of Policy Agendas,” *Political Science Quarterly* 104, no. 2 (Summer 1989): 285.

As described below, a variety of framing methods have been employed by various stakeholders to ensure that the ‘conditions’ of women’s inequality are seen as problems amenable to human intervention.

The attribution of women’s inequality to societal constructs began in the late 60s where the problem stream began forming with the release of the *Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women* (CEDAW) by the United Nations (UN) Commission on the Status of Women (CSW).²² Subsequently, 1975 was declared *International Women’s Year* by

²¹ *Ibid.*, 285

²² United Nations General Assembly, Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (New York: UN, 1967).

the UN, with the long term goal of addressing women's inequality and increasing awareness of the wide range of issues particular to women.²³

Prior to this, women's inequality was mostly attributed to accidental (nature) unintended causes or to individual male wrongdoing. It was viewed by many as a condition in which women were destined to remain, or that men were responsible for ameliorating in their role as providers for women. During this time period, a woman's condition moved from the accidental or unintended to an intended consequence of societal structure. There was a cause and blame for women's inequality, and this condition was seen as applicable to policy development, amenable to intervention by governments which were increasingly ascribed a responsibility to address the conditions of women and women's equality. Child rearing, for example, previously viewed as the natural condition of women as a result of child bearing, was identified as one of the causes of women's inequality within the proceedings of the International Women's Year conference.²⁴ The problem of child rearing was then re-framed as a shared responsibility between men, women and society as a whole.

Canada was very much a part of this global problem definition stage. In 1970 a Royal Commission was established to "inquire into and report on the status of women" in Canada.²⁵ A key part of the Royal Commission's mandate was to define the problem(s) of inequality and make policy recommendations.²⁶ Despite Canada's commitment to the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, which does not permit a distinction between the rights and freedoms of men and women, the Commission found that discrimination against women

²³ "Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year." New York: United Nations, 1976. Accessed April 25 2019, <https://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/mexico.html>.

²⁴ United Nations. "Background to the Conference", in *Report of the World Conference of the International Women's Year*. (New York: 1976), 2.

²⁵ Canada. Royal Commission. *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada* (Ottawa: 1970), vii.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, viv.

continued to flourish despite the cultural and social changes of the 1960s.²⁷ As a result, 167 recommendations were made reframing women's inequality from 'natural' condition to societal problem.²⁸ In addition, equality was also framed as a shared responsibility, in that "there should be equal opportunity [for men and women] to share the responsibilities to society as well as its privileges and prerogatives".²⁹

In the CAF, despite women's significant contributions to both World Wars, women's equality was not recognized as a policy problem by the leadership. Women were employed in the World Wars with the intent to address the shortage of men in the labour pool, not for the purpose of creating equal opportunity of employment for women.³⁰ Notwithstanding their employment first in administrative and medical and then mechanical, technical and flying tasks, women did not come to be seen as legitimate members of the profession of arms.³¹ Instead, they were expected to return to their 'natural condition' of child bearing and rearing at the close of the Second World War. As such, they were very quickly released after the Wars, with only a few continuing to serve as nursing sisters in the 50s and 60s.³² Leading into the 1970s, women's inequality was not yet understood as a problem within CAF culture; rather, women's equality was defined as an issue for the military by actors external to the CAF. As such, policy direction was forced upon the CAF by the political tier of government following the release of the *Report*

²⁷ *Ibid.*, xi.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 395.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, xii.

³⁰ Brown, V. & Okros, A. (2018). "Dancing Around Gender: Changing Identity in a Post-Deschamps Military," in *Culture and the Soldier: How Identity, Values, and Norms Intersect with Contemporary Military Engagements*, Breed, H.C. Ed. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press (in press), 2.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Vanessa Brown and Alan Okros, "Dancing Around Gender...", 2.

of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women.³³ This necessitated a series of administrative policy changes which will be further explored in the policy stream section of this document.

Once these changes were made in the CAF, the problem of women's equality appeared to dissipate for a time, only to resurface when individuals began to challenge systemic barriers to selection and geographical location. Identification of the cause or suppositions of who to blame was attributed to the institution by these individuals, and their legal teams. They argued that the CAF intentionally preserved physical barriers as well as geographical limitations to women's equal opportunities in employment.³⁴ In response, the institution posited that these systemic barriers were legitimate because women did not have the mental and physical skills to fulfill *bone fide* occupational requirements.³⁵ These requirements as laid out in the *Canadian Human Rights Act* stated that an employment practice is not discrimination if the "refusal, exclusion, expulsion, suspension, limitation, specification, or preference...is established by an employer to be based on *bona fide* occupational requirements".³⁶ Ironically, a document that was meant to ensure equal opportunity for all Canadians was used to justify the exclusion of women from certain occupations until as late as 2001.

Problem definition after this point became much more contentious. Women's inequality was no longer seen as a condition, but a problem. However, ascribing blame had now become a competition between those interested in seeing women achieve equality and the institution, which was naturally inclined to maintain its social order, i.e. no women combat roles.³⁷ CAF leadership began to realize that change with respect to the employment of women was being

³³ Rhea Maclean, Maj, "Equal but Unfair: The Failure of Gender Integration in the Canadian Armed Forces." *Joint Command and Staff Program Course Paper* (Canadian Forces College, 2017), 20.

³⁴ Vanessa Brown and Alan Okros, "Dancing Around Gender...", 3.

³⁵ Rhea Maclean, Maj, "Equal but Unfair...", 26.

³⁶ Canada. *Canadian Human Rights Act*. Statutes of Canada, 1977, 15 (1).

³⁷ Carol Agócs, "Institutionalized Resistance to Organizational Change," *Journal of Business Ethics* 16, no. 9 (June 1997): 46.

imposed by external authorities. Their discretionary authority with respect to employment policies was being constrained, as they now had to demonstrate to the Canadian Human Rights Commission, with approval by the Governor in Council, that the invoking of *bona fide* occupational requirements was legitimate.

To do so, the CAF launched the Service Women in Non-Traditional Environments and Roles (SWINTER) trials with the purpose of determining the “human consequences, if any, of introducing servicewomen into previously male roles and environments”.³⁸ Ostensibly, the SWINTER Trials were designed to demonstrate that the requirements of the CHRA were being met and that the CAF policies did not contravene the *Canadian Human Rights Act* or the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms*. However, their design was such that the process of integration took more time (trials took four years) and the continued belief that women should not be in non-traditional roles was reinforced,³⁹ allowing the CAF to shift blame from the institution to women by arguing that women did not meet the CAF’s physical requirements and, in addition, that these physical limitations would have a detrimental effect on the morale and welfare of the institution. This problem attribution interplay between the institution and external organizations continued until 2001 when the final barrier to women’s full employment in the CAF was lifted, allowing women to serve in submarines.

Although women could be fully employed in the military after 2001, other problems persisted. Recruitment and retention remained low; therefore, new problem definition challenges ensued. Blame once again was assigned to the institution due to systemic barriers and the institution continued to attribute cause to women who were either not interested or suited to

³⁸ Rhea Maclean, Maj, , "Equal but Unfair:..., 43.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

employment in the combat arms or other more traditionally male occupations.⁴⁰ By framing the problem in this fashion, the CAF leadership was not required to critically examine the internal workings of the organization.

This approach continued well into 2014, when allegations of sexual misconduct in the CAF were released in *Maclean's* magazine. This time, leadership of the CAF understood that the legitimacy of the military as an institution was under threat, naming Justice Marie Deschamps as the external review authority responsible for investigating this matter. The outcome of this investigation clearly defined the problem of an “underlying sexualized culture in the CAF that is hostile to women and the LGBTQ community, and conducive to more serious incidents of sexual harassment and assault”.⁴¹ Even in the face of this outcome, the then Chief of Defence Staff, General Tom Lawson, awkwardly attempted to assign blame to a few individuals who were “biologically wired in a certain way”.⁴² This caused much outrage and shortly after Tom Lawson’s resignation, his replacement General John Vance, publicly accepted that the institution had a problem that would immediately be dealt with through an operational campaign – Operation HONOUR.⁴³ General Vance recognized that attributing blame elsewhere would not work. He understood that the legitimacy of the CAF was at stake and there was a clear

⁴⁰ Barbara Kay, "Congratulations, women, on being eligible for the draft!" *National Post*, March 2019. Last modified on 5 March 2019. <https://nationalpost.com/opinion/barbara-kay-congratulations-women-on-being-eligible-for-the-draft>

⁴¹ Justice Marie Deschamps, "External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces." *External Review*, 2015. Accessed on 25 April 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/external-review-2015.html>

⁴² CBC News story, “Military sexual misconduct due to 'biological wiring,' Gen. Tom Lawson tells CBC News”, CBC News, 17 June 2015.

⁴³ Details on the history and current initiatives of Operation HONOUR can be found at <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour.html>.

requirement to do something to avoid a decline in public trust, such as what the CAF had faced following the Somalia affair of the early 90s.⁴⁴

As Stone asserts, “problem definition is the active manipulation of images of conditions by competing political actors”.⁴⁵ The women’s equality problem stream is characterized by an active manipulation between various actors in competition to attribute cause to the other. The interplay between the military institution, whose interest lies in protecting the institution from too much change to its internal stability, and external forces interested in advancing women’s equality resulted in a battle of causal attribution. This interplay continues today where blame for the underlying sexualized culture in the CAF is mostly ascribed to individual behaviours contributing to this culture.⁴⁶ This form of problem recognition allows the CAF to respond to the ‘problem’ by developing policy options that focus on dealing with individual behaviours, rather than focusing on the structural and social elements that contribute to the culture.

The Policy Stream

Much like the problem stream, the policy stream moves along with a number of ideas that float around various communities of specialists.⁴⁷ These specialists include researchers, planners, evaluators, academics and interest group analysts.⁴⁸ Within these communities there is often a tight knit group of individuals with a shared interest in furthering policy proposals focused on their particular area of interest, such as health care or education. This is true with respect to specialists who focus on women’s equality in the CAF where there is a limited group of ‘usual suspects’ that are often seen at seminars and conferences. This group is made up of academics,

⁴⁴ A brief history of the Somalia Affair can be found in the Canadian Encyclopedia, accessed 25 April 2019, <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/somalia-affair>,

⁴⁵ Deborah A. Stone, “Causal Stories...”, 299.

⁴⁶ The Operation HONOUR website provides various resources that outline the behavioural change approach that has been employed since its inception. Last modified 01 May 2019. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/conflict-misconduct/operation-honour.html>.

⁴⁷ Kingdon, *Agendas...*, 116.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

policy analysts from within the CAF and some interest group analysts that share a policy space with the CAF, such as civil society organizations focused on the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

While the other two streams continue to flow independently, the specialists in the policy stream test their ideas within their various communities through seminars, conferences, journals, and proposals. The testing phase of this process determines whether the myriad of policy ideas are considered feasible or not within these respective communities. Currently, a number of policy ideas that offer methods or alternatives to addressing the problems associated with women's inequality in the CAF are being tested, including addressing the toxic aspects of militarized masculinity through research and education⁴⁹, adjusting gender mainstreaming (Gender Based Analysis + in Canada) policies to better reflect difference⁵⁰ and addressing practices of gender essentialism⁵¹.

Policy Entrepreneurs

Policy entrepreneurs are different from the specialists that generate ideas in that their motivations differ from those who have devoted large portions of time to becoming experts in a particular policy matter. Kingdon describes policy entrepreneurs as individuals that could be “in or out of government, in elected or appointed positions, in interest groups or research organizations.”⁵² However, their defining characteristic is “their willingness to invest their resources – time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money – in the hope of a future return.”⁵³ Their motivations can be altruistic; however, they can also be motivated by desires for personal

⁴⁹ For a policy proposal focused on addressing militarized masculinity see Vanessa Brown and Alan Okros, “Dancing Around Gender...”, 26.

⁵⁰ For one point of view on adjusting gender mainstreaming policy see Stephanie Paterson, "What's the problem with gender-based analysis?" *Canadian Public Administration* 53, no. 3 (September 2010): 395-416.

⁵¹ For an understanding of gender essentialism see Rebecca Tiessen, "Gender essentialism in Canadian Foreign aid commitments to women, peace and security." *International Journal* 70, no. 1 (2015): 84-100.

⁵² Kingdon, *Agendas...*, 122.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

satisfaction or personal aggrandizement. Remaining employed, getting promoted, or seeing a legacy project come to fruition are all elements of why certain proposals are taken up over others.

In the case of women's equality in the CAF, the policy entrepreneurs are varied. Some are formerly tasked with championing the cause, such as the Defence Champion for Women, while others hold less formal roles, such as academics that have devoted considerable time advocating for women's equality. These individuals have varying amounts of time to even address the question of women's equality in the CAF. For example, the Defence Champion for Women, appointed by the CDS, has sometimes been given this secondary duty based more on availability rather than affinity for the role. As a consequence, some individuals selected for this role have spent limited time and effort in researching, understanding and suggesting solutions to the problem.

A condition that is required for successful institutional entrepreneurship is autonomy.⁵⁴ Our Defence Champions are constrained by the "institutional relationships" that preclude them from taking independent action.⁵⁵ However, entrepreneurs, such as Dr. Alan Okros have a greater degree of autonomy due to the academic independence their occupations demand. This does not mean that their entrepreneurial roles are easy, as true entrepreneurship requires "risk and uncertainty",⁵⁶ a reality that Dr. Okros has experienced over several years of work towards increasing diversity and women's equality initiatives in the CAF⁵⁷.

The Political Stream

⁵⁴ Carolyn Hughes Tuohy, *Remaking Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), 441.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ Carolyn Hughes Tuohy, *Remaking Policy...*, 441.

⁵⁷ This statement is drawn from various informal discussions with Dr. Okros throughout the period of September 2018 to March 2019.

The political stream is comprised of “public mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions [in parliament], and changes of administration.”⁵⁸ This is different from the world of specialists where viable solutions to problems are conceptualized through research and analysis in the policy stream or the world of bureaucrats where salient public issues are monitored and identified as problems amenable to government action. This stream has a “powerful effect on agendas”, because it can determine whether items become more or less prominent on the agenda.⁵⁹ For clarity, Kingdon’s political stream refers specifically to elected politicians in government and not to all political actors in society.⁶⁰

The most recent political event that has precipitated the movement of women’s equality onto the agenda is the 2010 federal election that resulted in a liberal party majority government. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is the first prime minister to openly declare himself a feminist and campaign on a feminist agenda. He established a cabinet of 15 women and 15 men, placing gender equality clearly on the agenda. This set of events created a natural convergence of the three streams creating a window of opportunity for policy entrepreneurs to move policy options onto the agenda. Examples include the Elsie Initiative⁶¹ and a renewed commitment to Gender Based Analysis +.⁶² The centrality of women’s equality on the Liberal government agenda has placed mounting pressure on the CAF to consider women’s equality as central to its institutional agenda.

With a federal election on the horizon, the opportunity for change within the political stream has accelerated. Three parliamentary committees have expressed a renewed interest in

⁵⁸ Kingdon, *Agendas...*, 145.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

⁶¹ Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada, “The Elsie Initiative for Women in Peace Operations”, accessed on 27 April 2019, <https://pm.gc.ca/eng/news/2017/11/15/elsie-initiative-women-peace-operations>.

⁶² Gouvernement of Canada, Response to the Audit of Gender-based Analysis Fall 2015 Report of the Auditor General of Canada, accessed on 28 May 2019, <https://cfc-swc.gc.ca/gba-acg/index-en.html>.

garnering a more in depth understanding of issues pertaining to women's equality in the CAF: the Standing Committee on National Defense (NDDN), the Standing Committee on the Status of Women (FEWO), and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts (PACP).⁶³ The NDDN has met to discuss diversity (with a major focus on women) on eight separate occasions since October, 2018.⁶⁴ The PACP has met twice since January to discuss the Auditor General's report on inappropriate sexual behaviour in the CAF, and the FEWO has two upcoming meetings regarding the treatment of women in the Department of National Defence.⁶⁵ Membership on these committees is made up of representation from the various political parties in proportion to their numerical strength in the House of Commons.⁶⁶

This recent multi-partisan interest is an indicator that political parties across the ideological spectrum recognize the importance of this issue as an agenda item in the upcoming election. Members of these committees no doubt will draw on their experience on these committees, and any committee conclusions, to prepare their respective partisan agendas around this issue. Since it has garnered interest among members of two major political parties beyond the Liberal Party of Canada, there is a reasonable likelihood that the policy issue of women's equality within the CAF will not fall off the agenda even if there were a change in administration.

Why problems fall off the agenda

There are a variety of reasons why problems fall off the agenda. Sometimes success is declared before a problem has been solved in order to prove to the electorate that an issue has

⁶³ House of Commons. List of Committees of the House of Commons, Accessed May 2019.
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/Home>

⁶⁴ House of Commons. NDDN Website. Accessed May 2019.
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/NDDN>

⁶⁵ House of Commons. FEWO and PACP Websites. Accessed May 2019.
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/FEWO>, <https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/PACP>.

⁶⁶ House of Commons. About Committees. Accessed May 2019.
<https://www.ourcommons.ca/Committees/en/About>.

been adequately resolved.⁶⁷ At other times problems drop from the agenda because it is determined that they are far too complex to address and therefore too difficult to address within an electoral cycle.⁶⁸ Problems also fall from prominence when the financial or social costs are perceived as too high.⁶⁹ Lastly, problems that make it onto the agenda are even deemed to be ‘faddish’ and quickly fall from the agenda.⁷⁰

One example of declaring success too early is when the final barrier (submarine service) to women’s employment in the CAF was removed. At a press conference in December 2001, Vice Admiral Greg Maddison, then head of the Royal Canadian Navy, declared that women had been successfully introduced on board ships 15 years prior to the 2001 submarine service announcement and that “indeed there was a certain percentage of men who thought that this was not the best idea.... and yet after 15 or 16 years this has been an extraordinarily successful endeavor” and, “that’s a success and [the integration of women into submarines] will be a success as well”.⁷¹ When asked by one reporter whether he thought the 70% of men who were against women on submarines would be an obstacle, Vice Admiral Maddison responded:

No... I've got a great deal of confidence and belief that our men will look at this as the positive step forward... which will cause a lessening in terms of the operational tempo for just the men who serve in submarines because it's a very small community.⁷²

By declaring the ‘irrefutable success’ of women’s integration onboard surface ships and predicting a similar outcome in the submarine fleet, it was easy for CAF’s leadership to declare that there was no longer a problem with respect to women’s equality in the military. In other

⁶⁷ Kingdon, *Agendas...*, 103.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 104.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 105.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

⁷¹ Press Conference Transcript, DND Operational Briefing; *Canadian Navy to Allow Female Sailors to Serve Aboard Submarines* (December 2001), accessed 4 May 2019, <http://www.forces.gc.ca/en/news/article.page?doc=navy-opens-submarine-service-to-women/hnmxl9qd>.

⁷² *Ibid.*

words, since all occupational doors were now formally open to women, there was no longer a need to keep women at the forefront of the political agenda.

We know, 18 years after Vice Admiral Maddison's announcement that the problem of gender inequality has not disappeared. The number of women serving in submarines remains low (women comprise 14 of 386 (3.6%) qualified submariners in the CAF⁷³) and as previously mentioned the "confidence and belief" in our men was put into question when the problem of women's equality resurfaced with the Deschamps report declaring the CAF environment "hostile" to women.⁷⁴

Agenda setting strategies

While Kingdon's multiple streams framework provides a useful model for analyzing how women's equality made it on to the agenda, it does not provide practical strategies to assist advocates with getting problems on to the agenda or keeping them there. James Dearing and Everett Rogers argue the importance of looking at agenda setting through the lens of three main agendas: "(1) the media agenda which influences (2) the public agenda, which in turn may influence (3) the policy agenda".⁷⁵ In addition, they provide concrete strategies for agenda setting. This section uses Dearing and Rogers' framework as a backdrop for providing recommendations to advocates on how to keep women's equality from falling off the political agenda in the event of an endogenous change, such as a change in government or an exogenous change, such as war or a global fiscal crisis.

The first step in agenda setting is to develop a coalition or planning group composed of individuals who are invested in seeing a particular problem related to CAF women's equality

⁷³ Statistics provided by Canadian Submarine Force from Monitor Mass report on 6 May 2019.

⁷⁴ Justice Marie Deschamps, "External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces." *External Review*, 2015. Accessed on 25 April 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/external-review-2015.html>

⁷⁵ James W. Dearing and Everett M. Rogers, *Agenda-Setting* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications, 1996), 4.

progress towards policy implementation.⁷⁶ Potential members of such a coalition are academic members of the CAF, researchers, policy analysts and members of civil society who share intersecting causes with the CAF. Given that real change in military institutions is often forced by external authorities,⁷⁷ members of this coalition should come from both within and without the organization. Moreover, members internal to an organization are limited by its internal rules and norms.

The Defence Women's Advisory Organization (DWAO) has demonstrated potential in this area by making recommendations that have led to change like the 'ponytails' CANFORGEN described earlier.⁷⁸ However, in order provide even greater contributions, coalitions such as the DWAO must come together and agree on the problem definition and find consensus on the best policy method to address what is limiting women's full inclusion in the CAF. Currently, the institutional problem of the underlying sexualized culture is being attacked through Operation HONOUR policy, which incorporates a 'zero tolerance' approach to sexual misconduct. Yet, Operation HONOUR does not address the underlying problems contributing to hostility towards women that, in turn, can lead to sexual misconduct.

Policy alternatives suggest we must address this problem through a policy approach that tackles the underlying, root causes of the issue. Some have argued that a root cause may be the idealization of specific sets of masculinity, otherwise noted in broader research on the topic as militarized masculinities.⁷⁹ By drawing on both feminist and masculinities theory in their work on cultural change in the military, Brown and Okros argue that women's equality is often framed

⁷⁶ Thomas J. Wolff, "Community Coalition Building - Contemporary Practice and Research" *American Journal of Community Psychology* 29, no.2 (San Francisco: Plenum Publishers), 173.

⁷⁷ Franklin C. Pinch, "Diversity: Conditions for an Adaptive, Inclusive Military", in *Challenge and Change in the Military: Gender and Diversity Issues* (Kingston: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2006), 172.

⁷⁸ Defence Women's Advisory Organization Facebook page, 9 April 2019.

⁷⁹ Vanessa Brown and Alan Okros, "Dancing Around Gender...9.

as a woman's problem, rather than addressing the real issue. They argue that the underlying issue may be the lack of understanding of "masculinity in the military and specifically on the particular forms of idealized and sexualized masculinities incorporated in military culture."⁸⁰ Brown and Okros offer a policy solution that involves; increasing institutional understanding of militarized masculinities; determining which aspects are valuable and which aspects are toxic; and then working collaboratively with stakeholders to develop strategies to loosen the military's "currently tight culture."⁸¹ This is one example of a problem definition and policy solution that a coalition could select as central to women's equality in the CAF, as well as one that could be addressed through policy action.

The next step is to plan and implement a communication campaign that will influence public opinion in favour of a particular problem and policy solution. This is very difficult within a military context, since it would be disloyal or even mutinous for coalitions comprised of military members to highlight issues that do not reflect the CAF in a positive light. However, careful communication that focuses on the steps being taken towards creating a positive CAF culture can allow for announcements about research that is being conducted to address culture change, such as the research on militarized masculinities described above.

Once communications have begun, the need to address public opinion will commence. This will involve direct outreach with the public, partnering with the media, and partnering with members of the public who will champion the cause. The CAF has been doing a very good job of this since the Liberal government's feminist agenda was launched. There are multiple communications about the initiatives to build a culture of respect in the CAF across media and websites. Future coalitions that are interested in keeping women's equality on the agenda can

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 27.

learn from these communications and develop strategies to engage with the public on problems and policy solutions.

Finally, coalitions need to identify and develop alliances with policy entrepreneurs who are willing to push policy options forward when windows of opportunity open. Current entrepreneurs are the CDS, General John Vance, who understands that the future of the institution depends on the success of diversity initiatives in the CAF. His hard stance toward sexual misconduct has led to serious progress in policy implementation meant to address the behavioral aspects of the problem as it has been defined. The Defence Women's Champion and Director General Canadian Armed Forces Strategic Response Team - Sexual Misconduct, Commodore Rebecca Patterson, is also working hard to implement policies that will assist victims of sexual assault. In addition, Diversity Champions have been appointed to ensure that the CAF Diversity Strategy is implemented. The lead Diversity champion, Rear Admiral Cassivi, stated in a short sixty second interview that his goal was "to make the CAF a more inclusive place".⁸² These leaders are mandated through appointment to oversee these initiatives; however, their tenure is short (2-3 years) and their degree of investment is not guaranteed because these champion roles are secondary to their primary duties within the CAF. It is, therefore, important that coalitions continue to look for and develop entrepreneurs who will invest in keeping women's equality on the agenda.

CONCLUSION

As the literature demonstrates, agenda setting is a complex process that involves separate problem, policy and political streams that come together when windows of opportunity open.

⁸² The Maple Leaf, "60 Seconds with RAdm Luc Cassivi, Co-champion for Gender and Diversity for Operations", accessed on 4 May 2019, <https://ml-fd.caf-fac.ca/en/2018/06/15169>.

Policy entrepreneurs take advantage of these openings to push preferred policy options and associated causal narratives to the top of the political agenda. Moreover, agenda setting involves strategic engagement with the media, the public and the policy world in order to move problems and their policy solutions forward. The problem, policy and political streams converged at various times throughout the evolution of the women's equality agenda in the CAF, most notably following the 1970 release of the *Report of the Royal Commission on the Status of Women in Canada*, and again after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau won a majority government in 2015. The scope of this paper did not allow for an in depth analysis of coalition behaviours; however, additional research could focus on identifying the core beliefs held by competing coalitions. Moreover a more in-depth case study of the multiple streams would be of benefit to advocates who would like to see women's equality in the CAF move beyond ponytails, pantyhose and pumps.

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