



**A Total Institution Within a Total Institution:
The Implications of Culture on the Canadian Military Colleges and
Officer Development in the Canadian Armed Forces**

Major Anonymous

JCSP 50

Exercise Solo Flight

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A TOTAL INSTITUTION WITHIN A TOTAL INSTITUTION: THE IMPLICATIONS OF CULTURE ON THE CANADIAN MILITARY COLLEGES AND OFFICER DEVELOPMENT IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Canadian officer development is a subject that has undergone extensive internal study throughout the last seventy years. Although there have been several developments over this time, the overarching structure and socialization models at the primary Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) training and education institutions, the Canadian Military Colleges (CMCs), have generally remained reflective of the establishment's history. The future of the current model of officer development at the CMCs is, however, presently at what has been described as a “crossroads”¹. Over the last decade, external inquiries, culminating with former Supreme Court of Canada Justice Louise Arbour’s Independent External Comprehensive Review (IECR) Report², have shed light on deep-rooted systemic issues within the officer development systems at the CMCs, including misogynistic and discriminatory behaviour and sexual misconduct³. In response to the IECR Report recommendations, in December 2023 the Minister of National Defence announced the establishment of the CMC Review Board to assess the “benefits, advantages and disadvantages” of continuing to conduct ROTP development under the current CMC model⁴. When the CMCs are viewed within the context of a “Total Institution” framework, it becomes clear that future changes in CMC climate and culture that could result from this review have the potential to present an important moment in history not just for the CMCs but for the wider Canadian Armed Forces (CAF), as the two are inextricably linked and reinforcing, particularly with regard to CAF leadership climate and the organization’s culture. The amplification of climate and culture experienced by Naval and Officer Cadets (N/OCdt) throughout their time at the CMCs have implications that extend beyond graduation, both by the intentional design of the

¹ “Canada’s Military Colleges Are at a Crossroads. What 2 Graduates Want Now - National | Globalnews.Ca,” accessed April 23, 2024, <https://globalnews.ca/news/10158597/royal-military-college-review-canada/>.

² Louise Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” Independent External Review (Montreal, QC, May 20, 2022), <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/report-of-the-independent-external-comprehensive-review.html>.

³ Maya Eichler, Tammy George, and Nancy Taber, “The Arbour Report and Beyond,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2023, 23, no. 2 (2023): 40.

⁴ National Defence, “Minister Blair Announces Establishment of Canadian Military Colleges Review Board,” News Releases, Government of Canada, December 6, 2023, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/news/2023/12/minister-blair-announces-establishment-of-canadian-military-colleges-review-board.html>.

training institutions as Total Institutions and through symptoms of the hazards of this design.

This paper will draw from internal and external review reports to understand the perspective of former N/OCdts and their experiences at the CMCs. Due to the scope and nature of these inquiries heavily focusing on the experiences of women, this paper will not present a holistic intersectional view using a Gender-Based Analysis Plus approach. Although this paper will not explicitly cover this, it must be acknowledged that men, women and gender-diverse people experience structures of power and marginalization differently *and* that these experiences are compounded by other dimensions of identity such as “race, ethnicity, sexuality, Indigeneity, and ability”⁵. Additionally, for the purpose of this paper, Canada’s two military colleges, the Royal Military College (RMC) Kingston and Collège militaire royal de Saint-Jean (CMRSJ), will be collectively referred to as *the CMCs*. Although both colleges have distinct and unique elements of history and programming, they share dominant structures and cultures and together work in conjunction to provide the primary training, education and socialization for ROTP officer development.

This paper will examine the system of officer development and socialization at CMCs and explore the potential implications of CMC culture on both individual officers and the greater CAF, as well as the reinforcing relationships between these two institutions and individual officers. The paper will begin with a brief historical overview of the CMC officer development system, particularly reviewing several internal and external reviews which highlighted problematic systemic issues. Next, it will introduce Goffman’s concepts on Total Institutions (TI). Using the framework of the TI alongside other concepts on institutions, this paper will then explore how these ideas may be related to systemic issues that extend beyond a CAF officer’s graduation from CMC, in particular: secondary socialization and sub-cultures, the entrenched culture of inappropriate behaviour and misconduct; and the power dynamics within the formative leadership and learning environment. Finally, this paper will conclude by briefly exploring several recommendations made in recent reports with respect to improving the culture at the CMCs and officer development in order to use these institutions as an incubator for greater change within the CAF.

⁵ Eichler, George, and Taber, “The Arbour Report and Beyond,” 36.

BACKGROUND

The Canadian military college system began with the founding of RMC in 1876⁶. Though initially mirrored after the education and training model observed at the United States Military Academy at West Point, at its onset “British military tradition was paramount at RMC”⁷. In the early years of the college, it was primarily staffed by British military officers, the doctrine forming the curriculum was British until the 1950s, and “the uniform and parade drill were (and are) British inspired”⁸. Initially created to provide advanced technical training and education to artillery and engineering officers, the programming of the CMCs has evolved over time with the needs of the military officer profession – now providing training and education, to include a full university undergraduate degree to all officer trades entering through ROTP, with exception of several specialist trades (e.g. dentist, doctors, etc.)⁹. ROTP entry through the CMCs makes up approximately “20-25% of the annual entry-level officer intake in recent years”¹⁰. Those who are accepted attend tuition-free, live on campus and are paid a small salary¹¹. This subsidization, however, is in exchange for an obligatory post-graduation service commitment of five years¹² in the CAF. In order for a N/OCdt to graduate from the CMCs and receive a commission, they must successfully complete the Four Pillars, which form the core framework of the CMC program: academics, bilingualism, military leadership, and physical fitness. The Four Pillars system will be discussed in greater detail throughout this paper, however, it is important to note that this model has not only survived but has increased in scope over the course of several major internal reviews over the last 75 years¹³

As an institution, the CMCs have been the subject of at least a dozen studies and reviews since 1969, most of which focus on the quality of the programming as well as the military proficiency and professionalism of the officers it produces¹⁴. It is only within the

⁶ Dr. Cameron Pulsifer, “The Royal Military College Of Canada: 1876 to the Present,” *Canadian War Museum* (blog), accessed April 23, 2024, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/the-royal-military-college-of-canada-1876-to-the-present/>.

⁷ Pulsifer.

⁸ Pulsifer.

⁹ Dr Danic Parenteau and LGen J.O. Michel Maisonneuve, “Time to Reset the Canadian Military Colleges as Military Academies,” *Vimy Paper - Conference of Defence Associations Institute* 52 (October 2022): 6.

¹⁰ Howard G. Coombs, “The Royal Military College: A National University,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Winter 2023, 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 44.

¹¹ Coombs, 45.

¹² Serena Hedrich, “Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP),” Text, The Royal Military College of Canada - Regular Officer Training Plan, March 23, 2015, <https://www.rmc-cmr.ca/en/registrars-office/regular-officer-training-plan-rotptp>.

¹³ Randall Wakelam, “Whither RMC — RMC’s Brand Problem,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2023, 23, no. 2 (2023): 56.

¹⁴ Jim Barrett, “From Rowley to Arbour: The Royal Military College through Six Reports,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Winter 2023, 23, no. 1 (January 1, 2023): 19.

last decade that the “prevailing climate”¹⁵ and culture of the CMCs have been placed under review, in part due to increased awareness of concerning underlying cultures within the wider CAF. The selected reports that will be used throughout this paper include the following titles, abbreviated to the study leaders where appropriate: the 2015 Deschamps Report¹⁶; the 2017 Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture and Regular Officer ROTP Programme at RMC Kingston (SSAV)¹⁷, the 2017 OAG Report¹⁸; the 2019 Statistics Canada Report on Experiences of unwanted sexualized and discriminatory behaviours and sexual assault among students at Canadian military colleges (Statcan Report)¹⁹; and the 2022 Arbour Report (IECR)²⁰. These reports were specifically selected because, collectively, they expose issues that are “deep and entrenched, and stemmed from, and were symptomatic of, the underlying systemic issues with the college structure and culture”²¹. The issues raised in these reports will be discussed within the theoretical framework of Goffman’s TI along with other parallel concepts in order to better understand the implications of the current CMC model on individual officers and the larger CAF with an aim of reinforcing the overwhelming message within the external and independent review reports: that meaningful and sustained change is needed at the CMCs, and without it, the ongoing CAF culture change initiatives may be hindered.

THE TOTAL INSTITUTION

Erving Goffman, a Canadian sociologist, developed the theory of the Total Institution through the study of penitentiaries, mental health institutions and monasteries²². Although he did not directly use military institutions as an application of

¹⁵ Allan English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” *Canadian Military Journal*, Spring 2023, 23, no. 2 (2023): 50.

¹⁶ Marie Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces,” External Review, March 27, 2015, <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/external-review-2015.html>.

¹⁷ G.R. Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” Internal Review (Ottawa, ON: Department of National Defence, 2017).

¹⁸ Gordon Stock and Graig Millar, “2017 Fall Reports of the Auditor General of Canada to Parliament of Canada: Report 6—Royal Military College of Canada—National Defence,” OAG Report (Ottawa, ON: Office of the Auditor General of Canada, August 30, 2017).

¹⁹ Ashley Maxwell, “Experiences of Unwanted Sexualized and Discriminatory Behaviours and Sexual Assault among Students at Canadian Military Colleges, 2019,” no. 85 (2019).

²⁰ Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces.”

²¹ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 50.

²² Joseph Soeters, “Erving Goffman - Total Institutions, Interaction Rituals, Street-Level Bureaucrats,” in *Sociology and Military Studies: Classical and Current Foundations*, 1st ed. (New York, NY: Routledge, 2018), 91.

the TI, scholars and sociologists²³ immediately recognized this theory as remarkably important to the analysis of how the military operates, particularly the way personnel are recruited, “socialized, assimilated and controlled” in institutions such as “military academies, garrisons, bases, warships and gated camps in deployments abroad”²⁴ and how “members are bracketed out of the mainstream and subjected to structured hierarchal bureaucratic control”²⁵. Goffman describes TIs as living quarters and work environments where a large number of people who are cut off from the greater society, “together lead an enclosed, formally administered round of life”²⁶. More specifically he wrote:

The central feature of total institutions can be described as a breakdown of the barriers ordinarily separating these three spheres of life. First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member’s daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day’s activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfill the official aims of the institution.²⁷

When explaining the strong internal culture of the CAF, the Deschamps Report recognizes it as a result of the military’s “nature as a total institution”²⁸. However, based on the period of time these theories were developed and the severe nature of the institutions studied in the process (e.g. penitentiaries) when applying Goffman’s concept of the TI to the military, it could better be appreciated on a spectrum – with some institutions being more or less “total”. The Canadian Military, when viewed in its whole as an institution could be considered a “quasi-total institution”²⁹. To accommodate the modern context of TIs and evolving social norms and policies, sociologists have re-

²³ Felix Odartey-Wellington, “R/CanadianForces as a ‘Free Place’ for ‘Underlife’ in the Canadian Military ‘Total Institution’: Journal of Military & Strategic Studies,” *Journal of Military & Strategic Studies* 21, no. 2 (October 2021): 157.

²⁴ Soeters, “Erving Goffman - Total Institutions, Interaction Rituals, Street-Level Bureaucrats,” 91.

²⁵ Odartey-Wellington, “R/CanadianForces as a ‘Free Place’ for ‘Underlife’ in the Canadian Military ‘Total Institution’: Journal of Military & Strategic Studies,” 157.

²⁶ Odartey-Wellington, 155.

²⁷ Darla Fortune and Colleen Whyte, “Re-Imagining Institutional Spaces: The Communitizing Potential of Leisure,” *Leisure/Loisir* 35, no. 1 (February 16, 2011): 23–24.

²⁸ Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces,” 13.

²⁹ Soeters, “Erving Goffman - Total Institutions, Interaction Rituals, Street-Level Bureaucrats,” 94.

interpreted the original theory and developed terms including “portable total institution”, “semi-total institution” and “mobile total institution” as a means of advancing the idea that though restrictions may not be physically bound by actual walls, they may be through “biopolitical surveillance” in that the TI is “portaged by individuals in their bodies, minds and everyday activities as they radiate, communicate and behave still in the shadow, but not in the physical presence of their overseers”³⁰. The CAF is a unique organization within Canadian society, given that, as Professor Carol Agocs describes it, “the CAF is a total institution, not an employer that offers a conventional job or career: everyone is a soldier all the time no matter what their trade or profession is, and being a member of the CAF is a way of life”³¹. How can an organization ensure that an entrance level recruit is inculcated in such a way that they move from being a civilian to internalizing this military “way of life”?

Goffman’s theory describes a process of “self mortification” or “enculturation” that programs a new recruit to assume the values and ethos of the TI as part of their own³². Within the military setting, this initially takes place during entry-level training. When comparing the establishments where entry-level training occurs, such as the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School and the CMCs, with the CAF as a whole, the former falls on the “more total” end of the TI spectrum, with the CMCs standing out in particular as these programs are four-years in duration. Thus the CMCs are a total institution within a total institution (or quasi-total institution). As a quasi-TI, the CAF benefits from the more closed nature of the CMCs as it creates an environment whereby socialization can occur in controlled settings with little outside influence over the course of four years, and N/OCdts can internalize this new “world” as a “reality characterized by social cohesion, social norms, affective contents and cognitive components”, or, otherwise known as, military culture³³. In the case of the CMCs, how could the culture of the organisations as reported by Deschamps and the IECR be so divergent from that expected of CAF members?

Despite Goffman’s concept implying extreme control, within his theory he recognizes the existence of counterforces or resistance within the TI, which he coined as “secondary adjustments” that form an “underlife” of the TI. When considering the deep-rooted systemic issues within the CMCs, the official culture (i.e. the one which is to be

³⁰ Odartey-Wellington, “R/CanadianForces as a ‘Free Place’ for ‘Underlife’ in the Canadian Military ‘Total Institution’: Journal of Military & Strategic Studies,” 158.

³¹ Carol Agocs, “Canadian Dilemma: Is There a Path from Systemic Racism Toward Employment Equity for Indigenous People in the Canadian Forces?,” *Journal of Military & Strategic Studies* 19, no. 2 (2018): 282.

³² Odartey-Wellington, “R/CanadianForces as a ‘Free Place’ for ‘Underlife’ in the Canadian Military ‘Total Institution’: Journal of Military & Strategic Studies,” 156.

³³ Charlie Barnao, “Military Training. Group, Culture, Total Institution, and Torture,” *Italian Sociological Review* 9, no. 2 (May 2, 2019): 292, <https://doi.org/10.13136/ISR.V9I2.281>.

formally programmed) as well as the cultures formed by the “underlife” should be viewed as mutually influencing rather than completely delinked. Neither of these “cultures” is exclusively responsible for the systemic issues, as it would be inappropriate to imply the CMC's current and previous student body – that which practices the “underlife” of the institution – are on the whole responsible for these issues. They are, however, the subjects of the CMC, who, after four years of socialization and secondary socialization, pass through the gates of the TI into the wider CAF carrying (both consciously and unconsciously) the internalized values, ethos, and cultures they have learned throughout the enculturation process, for better or for worse. Before proceeding to examine these issues in more detail, it is important to note that the culture of the CMCs and that of the CAF are mutually influencing. The CMCs are not an island within the CAF. Both the Deschamps Report and the IECR remarked on similar and related issues within the CAF *and* the CMCs. Therefore, the CAF structurally has a direct influence on the CMCs, and the CMCs have an indirect influence on the CAF. To this effect, using the framework of the TI, the next section will discuss secondary socialization and concerning sub-cultures observed at the CMCs.

SECONDARY SOCIALISATION AND SUB-CULTURE

Goffman's theory on the TI outlines a socialization process whereby the social arrangements of the recruit's previous world are stripped away and replaced or reshaped to reflect the institution through a system of training, education, rituals, punishments and rewards³⁴. During the phases of the socialization process within the military TI, the individual is isolated from their prior social support structure, their social status is lowered, they are unable to receive meaningful support from their prior social relationships, and the social system within the military is relatively closed to non-military circles³⁵. During this type of socialization process, military sociologists observe that group bonds become particularly important. The group structures have been labelled as primary groups, defined as “a number of people who have developed a common way of adapting to the environment and a common way of behaving in it”³⁶. Thus, within a military TI, socialization and individual behaviour is not only guided, sustained and influenced by the institution itself but also by the primary groupings that the subjects of the TI have formed. The “norms, values, attitudes and behaviour standards” transmitted within primary groups are not only strictly those that concern the institution as a whole but also, and potentially conflictingly, those that have been adapted by the primary groups³⁷. This is very much reflective of the current system within the CMCs, where

³⁴ Soeters, “Erving Goffman - Total Institutions, Interaction Rituals, Street-Level Bureaucrats,” 92.

³⁵ Barnao, “Military Training. Group, Culture, Total Institution, and Torture,” 295.

³⁶ Barnao, 295.

³⁷ Barnao, 296.

socialization takes place “in a largely informal fashion through imitation and exchanges among and between the military cadre and through the informal passage of lessons and behaviours (good or bad, unfortunately) between senior and junior cadets”³⁸. The group relationships that prove so helpful in a battlefield setting for soldiers to seamlessly coordinate mutual support and cover can equally assist N/OCdts within the CMC TI to successfully navigate the demands of an environment with as little friction and as few punishments as possible. The nature of the demands imposed by the CMC TIs can be likened to those of a parallel concept: the “Greedy Institution”.

The concept of the “Greedy Institution” was first applied to the military when military sociologist, Mady Segal, used it as a framework to analyze the military and the family as two major intersecting “Greedy” social institutions³⁹. Where most social institutions “make only limited demands on their members” because of policy and legal frameworks that restrict the “demands that they can make on workers”, the military stands apart in the demands it can legally make on the time, energy, commitment and loyalty of its members⁴⁰. The CMCs, like the military as a whole, could be considered both “Greedy” and “Total” Institutions. Complementary to the initial socialization process into a TI, a “Greedy” institution works to eliminate competing claims on a person's loyalty and time by placing pressures and total claims on an individual in that “their demands on a person are omnivorous”⁴¹. In her analysis, Segal noted that the nature of the “Greedy Institution” demands cause spillover and pronounced stressors, not only on the individuals themselves but in other areas of their lives⁴².

Within the CMCs, not only are N/OCdts being socialized into the TI environment, but concurrently, they are required to meet the criteria of the Four Pillars program. The foundations of the Four Pillars program have survived multiple internal reviews, despite calls for serious re-assessment and integration⁴³. This program has only grown to meet the demands of the military profession, to the point that the Four Pillars have been described as “bursting at the seams”⁴⁴ and have led to an environment where “most RMC students are on the go about 18 hours a day” racing from “one deadline to the next”⁴⁵. Some would argue that the program is meant to ensure N/OCdts are prepared for the demands of a military career, and “designed to be demanding to encourage N/OCdts to

³⁸ Parenteau and Maisonneuve, “Time to Reset the Canadian Military Colleges as Military Academies,” 20.

³⁹ Mady Wechsler Segal, “The Military And the Family As Greedy Institutions,” *Armed Forces and Society* 13, no. 1 (1986): 9–38, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327X8601300101>.

⁴⁰ Rene Moelker et al., eds., *Military Families and War in the 21st Century: Comparative Perspectives*, 0 ed. (Routledge, 2015), 25 and 39, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203407530>.

⁴¹ Wechsler Segal, “The Military And the Family As Greedy Institutions,” 11.

⁴² Moelker et al., *Military Families and War in the 21st Century*, 28.

⁴³ Barrett, “From Rowley to Arbour: The Royal Military College through Six Reports,” 23.

⁴⁴ Wakelam, “Whither RMC — RMC’s Brand Problem,” 56.

⁴⁵ Wakelam, 59.

learn and change in striving to achieve excellence” and promote attributes of “self-discipline and self-sacrifice” – ideals which are characterized in the RMC motto “Truth, Duty, Valour” (TDV)⁴⁶. However, the OAG and SSAV Report findings indicate that an over-programming of time and a lack of decompression for N/OCdts in an atmosphere that is also tightly bound by rules, regulations, and scrutiny has produced a subculture of damaging behaviour and ethical standards that are “in direct contravention of what RMC is trying to produce”⁴⁷. The prevailing subculture at the CMCs transmits “how to assess which rules to follow, which ones to bend and which ones to ignore; and how to band together to protect their buddy when somebody stumbles and gets caught” with “narratives to justify breaking the rules”⁴⁸. What likely initially formed as secondary social norms developed to resist the structure and successfully navigate the overwhelming demands of the institution has amplified a cadet subculture motto “TDV, but don’t get caught”⁴⁹. This secondary socialization and subculture has the potential to extend beyond graduation, as Dr. Stephen Saideman reflected:

The sense of entitlement that has been displayed by some higher-ranking members of the Forces could potentially be connected back to the culture that has been fostered at RMC. “I think one place this might come from is the military college because there is this effort to create an elite,” he said. “While you want to create an elite, there must be some accountability and responsibility. But there’s something in the institution that has caused people to leave thinking that the rules don’t apply to them, which stays with them beyond that.”⁵⁰

In the overlap of the “Greedy” institutional qualities and TI socialization processes of the CMCs, what Goffman described as secondary adjustments and an “underlife” has been produced not only by the individual “subjects” but reinforced and amplified by the primary groups formed in the student body to navigate, circumvent and resist the stressors and restrictions of the institution. Social survival mechanisms in a “Greedy” TI have transformed into a subculture that has greater implications, an “underlife” where “TDV, but don’t get caught” exists on a spectrum from breaking CMC rules and academic misconduct to a prevalence of bullying, discrimination, sexual misconduct and misogyny. This is precisely why the CMC Review Board's investigation of the current

⁴⁶ Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” 36.

⁴⁷ Maddison et al., 18.

⁴⁸ Maddison et al., 15.

⁴⁹ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 50.

⁵⁰ Janet Lauersen, “Experts Reflect on the Arbour Report,” *CDA Institute* (blog), October 31, 2022, <https://cdainstitute.ca/experts-reflect-on-the-arbour-report/>.

structure, including program delivery in the format of the Four Pillars structure, is necessary.

CMC CULTURE AND MISCONDUCT

When considering the severe end of the CMC culture spectrum, where bullying, sexual misconduct, and misogyny have been perpetuated⁵¹ it may be useful to reflect on who the CMC TI was originally built for. Philosopher Paul-Michel Foucault's study and concepts on institutions complement Goffman's theories on TIs in many ways. Foucault observed that in institutions:

The process of normalization can be achieved by restricting and arranging the spaces within which people function, controlling their use of time through timetables, forcing them to engage in repetitive exercises and by subjecting them to normalizing judgments.⁵²

This approach has been likened to a “one size fits all mentality”⁵³. If one considers the context within which the CMC structures were developed, this “one-size” was built for an all-male population of predominantly European descent⁵⁴. From its creation in 1876 up until women began attending RMC in 1980, the CMC cadet wing was a “relatively homogenous group”⁵⁵. Thus, the dominant cultures, subcultures and socialization systems within the CMCs were built by and for a hyper-masculine population and engrained into the institution's identity for just under a century.

As previously discussed, one aspect of the socialization process in a TI is stripping away elements of the subject's personal identity to better align with the institution's values and culture⁵⁶. In Goffman's concept of the TI, he demarcates that new recruits undergo a process of socialization *and* assimilation⁵⁷. Within the last 40 years, as Canadian society has become more diverse, the CAF has become more diverse. The IECR Report found that in 2021/22, the CMC student body was composed of 23% of people who identified as women and approximately 25% who identified as visible minorities⁵⁸. Despite increased diversity within the college student body and the fact that

⁵¹ Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 232–33.

⁵² Fortune and Whyte, “Re-Imagining Institutional Spaces: The Communitizing Potential of Leisure,” 24.

⁵³ Fortune and Whyte, 24.

⁵⁴ Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 233.

⁵⁵ Wakelam, “Whither RMC — RMC's Brand Problem,” 60.

⁵⁶ Fortune and Whyte, “Re-Imagining Institutional Spaces: The Communitizing Potential of Leisure,” 24.

⁵⁷ Soeters, “Erving Goffman - Total Institutions, Interaction Rituals, Street-Level Bureaucrats,” 91.

⁵⁸ Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 222.

women had been attending RMC for nearly 40 years, this no longer homogenous population experiences socialization and assimilation into the same CMC TI culture and structure that had been entrenched for over one hundred years. The 2017 SSAV was established in part to investigate the prevailing climate at the CMCs, and found that because the schools were “dominated in numbers by males, an alpha male approach by N/OCdts to the various elements within the Four Pillars still exists”⁵⁹. It also observed that:

This does pressure those N/OCdts who are in the minority whether by gender, diversity or orientation to follow and accept the norms of the majority. For those who are reluctant to follow those norms or are unable to do so can be ostracized as they are seen to be unable to fit in.⁶⁰

The mechanisms used to impose these norms at the CMCs include “verbal abuse, bullying” and subjecting people who “struggle with adapting to college culture to varying degrees of inappropriate behavior”⁶¹.

The IECR noted that one of the byproducts of an organization's culture is sexual misconduct, particularly in a culture that is primarily male-driven and combat-oriented, where “gender bias is built in”⁶². The prevalence of sexual misconduct at the CMCs, initially reported within the Deschamps Report, was to the extent that it was described as a “passage oblig e” and an “ever-present risk”⁶³. Following the Deschamps Report, the CAF developed initiatives in an effort to reduce the instances of sexual misconduct CAF-wide, including Operation HONOUR. Considering the level of control the institution exercises on the subjects within a TI, one could presume that regulations could be uniformly and unopposedly applied. When in reality, the predominance of a hyper-masculine subculture entrenched by the nature of the CMC TI, combined with Goffman’s concept of “secondary adjustments” to the structure of the TI, results in strong resistance to a change in the entrenched cultures. This was demonstrated following a professional development engagement at RMC in 2015, when public reporting indicated that the speaker, invited to present on consent and sexual violence, was met with increasing hostility and resistance as she presented to the first to fourth-year students in

⁵⁹ Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” 15.

⁶⁰ Maddison et al., 15.

⁶¹ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 50.

⁶² Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 229.

⁶³ Deschamps, “External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual Harassment in the Canadian Armed Forces,” 14.

succession⁶⁴. Thus, the level of resistance to change, particularly on the topic of sexual misconduct, was related to the length of time the cadets had been socialized into the CMC TI culture and sub-cultures. One could also assume that the findings of the SSAV, conducted approximately two years following the Deschamps Report, indicate improvements in how the CMCs were managing sexual misconduct and having success implementing new CAF regulations on discrimination and sexual misconduct. However, in the years that followed the SSAV, both the StatCan Report and the IECR demonstrated this is not the case. Both reports found that there was a much higher rate of unwanted sexualized behaviours experienced at the CMCs than at civilian post-secondary institutions and a greater rate than within the larger CAF⁶⁵; and that women were sexually assaulted by a factor of six times more than men were⁶⁶ during their time at the CMCs. Considering the findings of all of these reports are based on interviews and feedback from N/OCdts at the CMCs, the discrepancy between the reports can possibly reveal the dynamics of being a minority within the engrained culture of the CMCs and the CAF. The SSAV investigation was led by an all-male team, while the IECR and Deschamps teams included women⁶⁷. Dr. Jim Barrett, a former cadet and former Dean at RMC, suggests that this discrepancy is possibly caused by respondents feeling more comfortable being open with Madame Arbour, who was both a woman and external to the CAF, than with the SSAV team, which was representative of the chain of command⁶⁸. As Barrett notes, this is supported by reports from women in earlier classes of CMC, indicating that “female cadets would not talk freely to the male staff, and especially not to the chain of command”⁷⁰, which could be viewed as the immediate hierarchy controlling the TI. When women and other minorities were introduced into the CMCs, they were introduced into a TI where they weren’t only required to socialize into a military culture, but also assimilate into the legacy culture of a hyper-masculine environment, where discrimination, bullying, sexual misconduct, and misogyny are mechanisms employed to impose and express the norms of the majority. This calls for a significant and concerted change in subculture. However, efforts to change this environment have been met with resistance and are slow to take hold, potentially in part because those who have historically made up the majority of leadership in the institution are the very people the institution was originally built for.

⁶⁴ Wakelam, “Whither RMC — RMC’s Brand Problem,” 59.

⁶⁵ Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 229–30.

⁶⁶ Maxwell, “Experiences of Unwanted Sexualized and Discriminatory Behaviours and Sexual Assault among Students at Canadian Military Colleges, 2019,” 3.

⁶⁷ Barrett, “From Rowley to Arbour: The Royal Military College through Six Reports,” 24.

⁶⁸ Barrett, 24.

⁶⁹ At the time the SSAV was conducted, the RMC military staff was “comprised primarily of white males” (SSAV Report, G 3-9)

⁷⁰ Barrett, “From Rowley to Arbour: The Royal Military College through Six Reports,” 24.

SYSTEMS OF POWER

A significant shift in sub-culture would require an assessment of the larger systems of power historically at play within the CMC TI. For this, philosopher Paul-Michel Foucault's Post-Modern theory on power may offer a unique perspective on the different types of power existing within the institution. Through his study of penitentiaries, mental health institutions and boarding schools – all examples of what Goffman considered TIs – Foucault found that prior concepts of power could not fully explain the dynamics occurring within these establishments⁷¹. He developed a theory distinguishing between two models of power: the juridical and the disciplinary models⁷². The juridical model of power most closely aligns with the traditional conceptualization of power and the type exercised by the military chain of command in that it is something that is “possessed (by individuals, a social class etc)” and “flows from a central source from the top to the bottom”⁷³. In contrast, the disciplinary model characterizes a different form of power, where power “is exercised rather than possessed” and is “something that can descend from the bottom and move upwards” in that it is not conditioned by a hierarchal power source but by social relations, or what he coined as “discourse”⁷⁴. For Foucault, these two types of power exist simultaneously and may “compete and conflict” but are also correlative⁷⁵.

Considering the disciplinary model of power is relevant for understanding the CMCs because it implies that power is not just held by “people and the positions they hold” but also generated in “history, in social customs, in the very language we use”⁷⁶. In this sense, the power generated by “social relations” at CMC is grounded in the institution's history, in the normalizing practices exercised, in its engrained culture and structure, and in how all of these affect the actions of individuals and the way they relate to one another and the system itself. Foucault used the term “field of social relations” to describe a type of environment or domain; in the instance of the CMCs and the male-dominated approach to the Four Pillars, N/OCTds are “subjected to the expectations, norms, historical circumstances, cultural expectations, and institutional arrangements of that field”⁷⁷. The determination of how powerful an individual is is based on the status of

⁷¹ Gerd Christensen, “Three Concepts of Power: Foucault, Bourdieu, and Habermas,” *Power and Education*, no. 0(0) (2023): 5.

⁷² Christensen, 5.

⁷³ Christensen, 5.

⁷⁴ Christensen, 5–6.

⁷⁵ Christensen, 8.

⁷⁶ Donna Ladkin and Joana Probert, “From Sovereign To Subject: Applying Foucault’s Conceptualization Of Power To Leading And Studying Power Within Leadership,” *The Leadership Quarterly*, Leader Power: Rigorous Insights on its Causes and Consequences, 32, no. 4 (August 1, 2021): 3.

⁷⁷ Ladkin and Probert, 9.

their social relations within the particular field⁷⁸. When considering the historical and cultural dynamics of the CMCs, the disciplinary model can offer perspective on how individuals experience the power exercised within the entrenched alpha male-dominated “field” and the pressure felt by those whose status is less powerful due to “gender, diversity or orientation”⁷⁹. One could argue that this type of power dynamic is specific to the unique college environment of the CMCs, simply the inner workings of the social network of a school-aged population. However, for the N/OCdts who could thrive within the alpha-male environment of the CMCs, “many of them are in positions of power and influence today” and have defended “RMC against any attempt to change it and some have threatened or publicly attacked and attempted to discredit survivors of sexual misconduct or their supporters who speak out”⁸⁰. Foucault explains that “disciplinary power works by being internalized in the individual's bodies” and that this type of power produces a perception of reality⁸¹. Thus, the power existing within a hyper-masculine culture is absorbed by the subjects of the institution, flows from one generation of students to the next over time, and influences how individuals view themselves, others, and the systems of power at play. The disciplinary power observed within the CMCs is not exclusive to them; the same power dynamic exists to an extent within the wider CAF, in part potentially being amplified and guarded by those who have graduated from the CMCs or have thrived within it – those who perceive the “reality” as something they have benefitted from.

One of the challenges with co-existing and, at times conflicting power models at the CMCs, is that the leadership structure employing juridical power is in part made up of third and fourth-year cadets holding leadership positions within the Cadet Chain of Authority. This structure, based on the old model of “head boys prevalent in English private schools for boys where upper-year students are invested with responsibilities towards their junior peers”⁸², results in those in cadet leadership positions at constant odds with the conflicting models of power. The IECR Report indicated senior cadets had disclosed they would often “protect their buddy” when they stumbled rather than report or exercise their position of leadership⁸³, in part potentially to maintain or protect their social relations within the CMC field. Additionally, the SSAV Report acknowledged that it “takes a degree of mature and subtle leadership skills at all levels” to recognize the

⁷⁸ Ladkin and Probert, 11.

⁷⁹ Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” 15.

⁸⁰ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 51.

⁸¹ Christensen, “Three Concepts of Power,” 6.

⁸² Arbour, “Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces,” 229.

⁸³ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 50.

complex dynamics within the CMCs and to “ensure the needs of the non-dominant groups are recognized, considered, and met”⁸⁴. Based on the findings of the Deschamps Report, “the number of misconduct incidents that involved senior officer cadets”⁸⁵ demonstrates that they are not adequately prepared with the necessary “mature and subtle leadership skills”⁸⁶ to serve as leadership among their peers. The IECR recommends the complete abolishment of the Cadet Chain of Authority. Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to examine the implications of an alternative structure, it is clear that all parties within the CMC system have a part to contribute to meaningfully altering the systems of power through major structural and cultural change. Thus, a serious review of the current structure of power and authority is required with significant consideration on how much of the responsibility should or should not rest on a cadet leadership structure, which is composed of the group that is likely most influenced by the tensions between the juridical and disciplinary models of power.

CONCLUSION

The CMCs are currently facing an imperative need for reform in response to deep-rooted systemic issues highlighted by internal and external reviews. The objective of this paper was to present a theoretical perspective of the CMCs within the framework of Goffman’s Total Institution, complimented by Segal’s “Greedy Institution” and Foucault’s models of power to better understand how systemic issues with the CMC structure and culture have come to be, are perpetuated, can extend beyond the CMC institution into the CAF, and have been resistant to change.

Goffman’s theory of socialization with the TI combined with the demands of a “Greedy Institution” has led to the emergence of a subculture characterized by a mentality of “TDV, but don’t get caught”, which normalizes unethical conduct and undermines the values the CAF seeks to instill. Multiple reviews have called for rationalization and integration of the content of the Four Pillars program as well as potentially increasing the duration of the CMC program to five years in an effort to instill and instruct the right things, but also in a way in which cadets can manage demands better⁸⁷. Increased diversity at the CMCs has not dramatically altered the historical culture and subculture of the CMC, as individuals from minority groups face intense pressure to not only socialize into the TI but also conform to norms established by the

⁸⁴ Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” 16.

⁸⁵ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 49.

⁸⁶ Maddison et al., “Special Staff Assistance Visit Report On The Climate, Training Environment, Culture And Regular Officer Training Plan (ROTP) Programme At The Royal Military College Of Canada - Kingston,” 16.

⁸⁷ Parenteau and Maisonneuve, “Time to Reset the Canadian Military Colleges as Military Academies,” 17.

subcultures dominated by the majority. Discrimination, bullying, and sexual misconduct are mechanisms used to enforce these norms, perpetuating a cycle of harm that is resistant to change. Although the CAF has implemented culture change initiatives, changes to the CMC culture will require sustained effort to get to the base of the cultural norms that have withstood over a century to change. Several experts, including Arbour, have called for an independent external monitoring body to be appointed to the CMCs to oversee culture change; in effect, this recommendation, if actioned, would ever slightly open up the CMC TIs⁸⁸. Foucault's distinction between juridical and disciplinary models of power offers insight into the systems of power within the CMCs, where conflicting power structures compound and complicate efforts to address systemic issues. The cadet leadership structure, based on traditional hierarchical models, may play a part in exacerbating these tensions. The IECR recommends the complete removal of cadets from the authority structures at CMCs; this would not, however, completely remove the issues produced by the cadet “underlife” of the TI or the power dynamics generated through the intersection of cadet social relations with the institution’s historical and cultural grounding.

Ultimately the future of the program depends upon the willingness of leadership across the board to confront and address the the entrenched cultures and structures that perpetuate systemic issues and harmful behavior. Considering that as of 2023, “62 percent of senior CAF leaders and 45 percent of current general officers and flag officers” graduated from one of the two CMCs, the colleges and their alumnae have and will have a significant influence on the future culture of the CAF⁸⁹. This could be either an opportunity or a curse. Inaction or resistance to change can further hinder ongoing efforts. However, by embracing meaningful reform, the CMCs could serve as catalysts for positive change within the CAF, promoting a culture of accountability and inclusivity.

⁸⁸ Lauersen, “Experts Reflect on the Arbour Report.”

⁸⁹ English, “After Arbour — ‘Reimagining’ RMC,” 46.

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