



Corporate Culture in the CF and DND

Descriptive Themes and Emergent Models

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Abstract

This exploratory study of the corporate culture of the Canadian Forces (CF) and Department of National Defence (DND) was undertaken to address an identified understanding gap. Understanding corporate culture is of particular importance when large-scale, fundamental reforms are introduced within an organizational context, as in the case of CF Transformation, because culture can either facilitate or hinder such change efforts. Interviews with 45 senior decision makers spanning the top “layers” of the organizational hierarchy of the CF/DND were analyzed, and a description of the corporate culture and its internal dynamics emerged with some clarity. Data from the interviews were also compared against an existing model of corporate culture drawn from the scholarly literature, with illuminating results. Recommendations for maintaining areas of strength, for improvement in problematic domains, and for additional research are made.

Résumé

Cette étude exploratoire de la culture organisationnelle des Forces canadiennes (FC) et du ministère de la Défense nationale (MDN) a été entreprise dans le but de combler un écart de compréhension. Il est particulièrement important de comprendre la culture organisationnelle lorsque de larges réformes fondamentales sont introduites dans un milieu organisationnel, comme la transformation des FC, parce que la culture peut faciliter ou entraver les efforts de changement. On a analysé les entrevues de 45 décideurs des niveaux supérieurs de la hiérarchie organisationnelle des FC et du MDN, ce qui a permis à une image claire de la culture organisationnelle et de sa dynamique interne d'émerger. L'examen des données des entrevues comparées à un modèle existant de culture organisationnelle tirée de la documentation académique a donné des résultats intéressants. On recommande le maintien des forces, des améliorations dans les secteurs problématiques et des recherches additionnelles.

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Executive summary

Culture is an issue of particular interest to the Canadian Forces (CF), in terms of culture at the (inter)national level, and in terms of the corporate culture(s) at play within the CF and Department of National Defence (DND). The latter aspect of culture is particularly pertinent given the formal series of organizational changes that collectively make up “CF Transformation” that have been implemented within the past two years, and that impact strongly (and in many cases, explicitly) on the corporate/organizational cultures. The study described in this report provides a “snapshot” of the corporate culture as it exists at the present time within the highest levels of the CF/DND.

Interviews with 45 senior decision makers within the top layers of the corporate culture were used to develop an understanding of the factors and issues at play within the culture as they are perceived by individuals who are primarily concerned with setting the strategic direction for the CF/DND. This executive summary provides hyper-links to portions of the report that deal with specific issue areas to facilitate communication of pertinent material to senior decision makers. Readers are strongly encouraged to read the report in its entirety, however.

The material provided by interview participants portrayed the corporate culture as largely positive. Against this backdrop, however, participants articulated an awareness of various “fault lines” that describe aspects of the culture requiring change, improvement, or additional scrutiny. The observations made by participants were captured within an [emergent framework](#) incorporating three issue sets, augmented by additional factors. Highlights of the emergent framework are provided in this summary. More substantial clarification and details are provided in the main report.

The first set of factors in the emergent framework was labelled “[People](#)”, and describes those aspects of the culture most directly impacted by individuals. Seven specific issue areas were grouped to make up this set:

Leadership and management – Participants reported that strong competency in both of these areas are expected and desired of senior decision makers. Further, a preference for directive, accountable leadership was reported by all respondents;

Communication – The importance of appropriate interpretation and transmission of information was noted by all participants, and many stressed the requirement for open and complete communications;

Trust, competence and respect – Participants put forward several possible factors contributing to perceived lack of trust. There was a distinct sense on the part of many

civilian participants that their qualifications are neither fully appreciated, nor valued within the corporate culture;

Secrecy and transparency – High levels of frustration were expressed with information hoarding behaviours and a general inability to obtain information easily within the corporate culture. Some participants expressed frustration, also, due to their perception that organizational decisions seem to be made too often without adequate, meaningful consultation within the corporate culture. Participants further noted the importance of transparency as a vehicle for establishing and maintaining credibility, both internally and externally;

Stovepipes – Interview participants described a perceived reluctance to embrace cooperative problem solving and solution generation within the corporate culture. The difficulty in shifting to coordinated, interoperable, capability-based approaches to a variety of military and corporate tasks when thinking in silos was also clearly evident;

Formality and informality – Military culture was observed to embody a greater degree of formality than civilian culture, in a general sense. Both military and civilian respondents reported perceptions that within the corporate culture, informal agreements and communications can “make things happen”, but leave many interested parties out of the discussion loop, and are counter to principles of accountability and transparency;

Impact of individual personalities – Senior decision makers are among the primary shapers of organizational culture, particularly at the corporate level. The pace of the posting cycle was described as keeping the corporate culture in a state of perpetual re-adjustment to new personalities and preferred procedures.

The second set of factors in the emergent framework was labelled “[Politics](#)” and describes a set of issues linked to organizational circumstances that constrain individual behaviour and perceptions of organizational behaviour. Seven issue areas were grouped to make up this set:

Identity – Issues of identity were raised only with respect to military identities, typically within the context of a shift from environmental identities to a CF identity. Both positive and negative reactions to this type of shift were expressed. No participants articulated the notion of a civilian identity (or identities) within the corporate culture;

Uniqueness and complexity – The CF/DND was perceived as unique within the broader government context on multiple bases. Complexity was also perceived to stem from multiple sources, including the organization’s historical reluctance to cease activities once they have been initiated;

Structures and processes – Structural and process bottlenecks were perceived by all respondents to pose barriers to rapid and agile organizational performance;

CF and Canadian society – Military participants were more vocal than their civilian counterparts in terms of the impact of social change on internal conditions (e.g., changes to the recruit pool, types of military missions assigned by the Government);

Public perceptions and Public Relations – The importance of effective working relationships with the media was perceived by most interview participants to be critical to overall organizational success;

Legislative frameworks – Understanding the broader government context and the legislation that constrains organizational decisions was perceived to pose greater challenges for military than for civilian decision makers;

Perspective – Some players who are relatively newer to the corporate culture, or who are “fringe” players, desire greater engagement with the corporate culture. Appropriate degrees of low visibility were noted for the corporate culture outside of NDHQ.

The third set of factors in the emergent framework was labelled “[Geography](#)” because it describes issues that are strongly related to or derive from the geographical separation of the corporate culture from the rest of the organization. Three issue areas make up this set.

Command and consensus – Tension described between operational military decision making (command) and bureaucratic processes (consensus) is minimized to the extent possible by the co-location of CF/DND strategic leadership within NDHQ;

Policy-Implementation gap – Multiple underlying factors that contribute to the gap between the intent of policy and its implementation were suggested, many of which were related to the physical separation of policy makers from policy “targets” throughout the organization;

Preparation – Military operations experience, including command, was not viewed as adequate preparation for effective performance within the corporate culture.

Multiple “[cross-cutting](#)” factors pertaining to communication, organizational change (particularly CF Transformation) and time emerged as having differential impacts on the three emergent issue sets (people, politics, geography). An additional model of the [cultural dynamics](#) that were described between the CF, DND and other government departments completes the descriptive portion of this report.

The descriptive material derived from the interviews is also considered through the lens of an established [model](#) of corporate culture drawn from the academic literature.

[Artifacts](#), [values](#), and [beliefs/assumptions](#) are the main components of this model. Each of these components are described and considered with specific reference to the interview material. The danger of failing to engage in meaningful self-reflection as an organization is highlighted by considering, particularly, the values and assumptions that contribute powerfully to organizational behaviour, including development and evolution of organizational culture(s).

The report [concludes](#) with a high-level consideration of the strengths and weaknesses of the corporate culture as it is perceived by the current cadre of senior decision makers. The civilian-military gap is highlighted as one of the predominant influences on the corporate culture, and the role of leadership in moulding the corporate culture is addressed briefly.

The final chapter of the report outlines recommendations grouped into six focus areas: [Rewarding desired behaviour](#) (in order to perpetuate the most positive aspects of the corporate culture and to improve those areas perceived as less positive); [flow of information](#); [preparation](#) for the corporate culture; necessary diminishing of [stovepiped solutions](#); [governance](#); and [additional research](#). A detailed list of specific research questions and general lines of inquiry likely to yield useful results (derived from the findings presented in this report) is also provided as an [Annex](#).

Hill, S. A. 2007. Corporate Culture in the CF and DND: Descriptive themes and emergent models. DRDC CORA TR 2007-19.

Sommaire

La culture est un enjeu qui intéresse particulièrement les Forces canadiennes (FC), notamment la culture nationale et internationale ainsi que les différentes cultures organisationnelles au sein des FC et du MDN. Ce dernier aspect est spécialement pertinent compte tenu de la série de changements organisationnels des deux dernières années à l'occasion de la « transformation des FC » et qui ont d'importantes répercussions (souvent patentes) sur la culture organisationnelle. L'étude décrite dans le présent rapport est un cliché de la culture organisationnelle d'aujourd'hui dans les rangs supérieurs des FC et du MDN.

On a interviewé 45 décideurs aux paliers les plus élevés de la culture organisationnelle, afin de comprendre les facteurs et les enjeux de la culture tels qu'ils sont perçus par les personnes principalement chargées de déterminer l'orientation stratégique des FC et du MDN. Pour faciliter la communication des données pertinentes aux décideurs de niveau supérieur, le présent sommaire comprend des hyperliens aux parties du rapport qui portent sur des enjeux particuliers. Néanmoins, il est fortement recommandé de lire le rapport au complet.

En général, les participants aux entrevues ont brossé un portrait positif de la culture organisationnelle. Malgré cela, ils ont indiqué certaines « lignes de faille », soit des aspects de la culture qui gagneraient à être modifiés, améliorés ou examinés de plus près. Les observations des participants sont regroupées dans un [cadre émergent](#) qui incorpore trois ensembles d'enjeux, et des facteurs supplémentaires. Ce sommaire présente les points saillants du cadre émergent. Des détails et des précisions se trouvent dans le corps du rapport.

Le premier groupe de facteurs du cadre émergent intitulé [les gens](#) décrit les éléments de la culture qui sont affectés directement par les individus. Ce groupe est composé de sept types d'enjeux :

Leadership et gestion — Les participants ont déclaré qu'ils s'attendent et souhaitent que les décideurs de niveau supérieur soient extrêmement compétents dans ces deux domaines. De plus, tous les répondants ont exprimé leur préférence pour un leadership directif et responsable.

Communication — Tous les participants ont noté l'importance de l'interprétation et de la transmission appropriées des informations. De plus, ils étaient nombreux à souligner la nécessité d'entretenir des communications ouvertes et complètes.

Confiance, compétence et respect — Les participants ont proposé plusieurs facteurs possibles contribuant à la perception de manque de confiance. Les participants civils

ont clairement exprimé leur sentiment que leurs titres de compétence ne sont ni pleinement reconnus ni valorisés dans la culture organisationnelle.

Secret et transparence — Les participants ont exprimé beaucoup de frustration relativement à l'accaparement de l'information et à l'incapacité générale de se renseigner facilement au sein de la culture organisationnelle. Certains participants ont également exprimé leur frustration quant à leur perception que les décisions organisationnelles sont souvent prises sans consultation adéquate et significative au sein de la culture organisationnelle. Ils ont, de plus, souligné l'importance de la transparence comme moyen pour établir et maintenir la crédibilité, tant à l'interne qu'à l'externe.

Cloisonnement — Les participants ont décrit la réticence à collaborer pour la résolution de problèmes et l'élaboration de solutions qu'ils perçoivent dans la culture organisationnelle. La difficulté d'adopter des approches coordonnées, interexploitables et fondées sur les capacités pour des tâches militaires et organisationnelles à cause du cloisonnement de la pensée est également manifeste.

Formalité et absence de formalité — On a noté qu'en général, la culture militaire comportait plus de formalités que la culture civile. Les répondants, tant militaires que civils, ont communiqué leur perception que dans la culture organisationnelle, les ententes et les communications informelles peuvent « faire avancer les choses », mais souvent en excluant des intéressés et à l'encontre des principes de responsabilité et de transparence.

Influence des personnalités individuelles — Les décideurs aux paliers supérieurs sont les principaux artisans de la culture organisationnelle, surtout au niveau de l'ensemble du Ministère. On a décrit le rythme du cycle des affectations comme causant, dans la culture organisationnelle, un perpétuel réajustement à de nouvelles personnalités et à des préférences de procédure.

Le deuxième groupe de facteurs du cadre émergent, appelé [politiques](#), décrit un ensemble d'enjeux reliés aux circonstances organisationnelles qui freinent les comportements individuels et les perceptions du comportement organisationnel. Ce groupe est composé de sept types d'enjeux :

Identité — On a soulevé des questions d'identité uniquement en ce qui a trait à l'identité militaire, généralement en rapport au passage de l'identité reliée au service à l'identité reliée aux FC. On a exprimé des réactions tant positives que négatives au sujet de ce changement. Aucun participant n'a parlé d'identité civile au sein de la culture organisationnelle.

Unicité et complexité — Les FC et le MDN sont perçus à plusieurs égards comme étant unique dans le contexte du gouvernement. La complexité est également perçue

comme ayant de nombreuses causes, dont la résistance traditionnelle de l'organisation à cesser une activité une fois qu'elle a été entreprise.

Structures et processus — Tous les répondants ont perçu des bouchons relativement aux structures et aux processus, ce qui crée des obstacles à la rapidité et à l'agilité du rendement organisationnel.

Les FC et la société canadienne — Les participants militaires étaient plus concernés que leurs collègues civils par l'effet des changements sociaux sur les conditions internes (p. ex., les changements au bassin de recrutement, le type de missions militaires assignées par le gouvernement).

Perceptions du public et relations publiques — La plupart des participants ont souligné l'importance des relations de travail efficaces avec les médias comme étant critiques au succès organisationnel.

Cadres législatifs — Les répondants considéraient que la compréhension du large contexte gouvernemental et la législation qui refrène les décisions organisationnelles posaient un plus grand défi aux décideurs militaires qu'à leurs collègues civils.

Perspective — Certains acteurs qui sont relativement nouveaux dans la culture organisationnelle ou qui sont des participants marginaux désirent y être plus intégrés. On a noté des niveaux appropriés de faible visibilité de la culture organisationnelle en dehors du QGDN. Le troisième groupe de facteurs du cadre émergent a été intitulé [géographie](#) parce qu'il comprend des enjeux qui sont fortement reliés à la séparation physique de la culture organisationnelle du reste de l'organisation, ou qui en découlent. Ce groupe est composé de trois types d'enjeux.

Commandement et consensus — Les tensions décrites entre le processus décisionnel des opérations militaires (commandement) et les processus bureaucratiques (consensus) sont diminuées autant que possible par le regroupement des services des FC et du MDN au sein du QGDN.

L'écart entre les politiques et leur mise en œuvre — On a nommé de nombreux facteurs comme contribuant à l'écart entre le but d'une politique et sa mise en œuvre, dont plusieurs reliés à la séparation physique des responsables des politiques et des « cibles » de la politique dans l'ensemble de l'organisation.

Préparation — On considérait que l'expérience des opérations militaires, y compris celle du commandement, ne représentait pas une préparation suffisante à un rendement efficace au sein de la culture organisationnelle.

De nombreux [facteurs transversaux](#) relatifs aux communications, au changement organisationnel (particulièrement à la transformation des FC) et au temps se sont dégagés comme ayant des effets différentiels sur les trois types d'enjeux émergents

(les gens, les politiques et la géographie). Un modèle additionnel de [dynamique culturelle](#) décrit entre les FC, le MDN et d'autres ministères complète la partie descriptive du rapport.

On examine aussi les données descriptives provenant des entrevues par le biais de la lentille d'un [modèle](#) de culture organisationnelle tirée de la littérature didactique. Les [artéfacts](#), [valeurs](#), et [croyances/présuppositions](#) sont les éléments principaux de ce modèle. On décrit chacun de ces éléments et on l'examine par rapport aux résultats des entrevues. Le danger que présente l'absence d'auto réflexion en tant qu'organisation est souligné notamment par l'examen des valeurs et présuppositions qui contribuent puissamment au comportement organisationnel, y compris le développement et l'évolution de la culture organisationnelle.

En [conclusion](#), le rapport présente l'examen approfondi des forces et faiblesses de la culture organisationnelle telle que perçues par le groupe actuel de décideurs de niveaux supérieurs. On souligne l'écart militaire civil comme étant une des influences prédominantes sur la culture organisationnelle, et on examine brièvement le rôle du leadership dans la conception de la culture organisationnelle.

Le dernier chapitre du rapport résume les recommandations qui sont divisées en six catégories : [Récompenser les comportements souhaités](#) (dans le but de perpétuer les aspects positifs de la culture organisationnelle et d'améliorer ceux qui sont moins positifs); la [circulation de l'information](#); la [préparation](#) à la culture organisationnelle; la diminution nécessaire des [solutions cloisonnées](#); la [gouvernance](#); et les [recherches supplémentaires](#). Une liste détaillée des questions et orientations générales de recherche (tirées des résultats des constatations présentées dans ce rapport) susceptibles de produire des résultats utiles est également fournie en [annexe](#).

Hill, S. A. 2007. *La culture organisationnelle au sein du MDN et des FC : Thèmes descriptifs et modèles émergents*. RDDC CARO TR 2007-19.

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1. Introduction

Organizational culture¹ has been a topic of some interest within the Canadian Forces (CF) and Department of National Defence (DND) periodically over the past decade or more. Most recently, “culture” was flagged as a critical aspect of the principles of CF Transformation (e.g., see the Chief of Defence Staff’s [elaboration of the principles](#) underlying CF Transformation, all of which require a culture-level shift in the ways in which the CF operates in order to achieve the desired outcomes).

Building upon conceptual work by McKee (2004a, 2004b), this investigation into the corporate culture in the CF and DND was conceived as an exploratory study. As has been noted elsewhere (e.g., McKee & Hill, 2006; English, 2004), systematic investigations of the culture of the CF and DND have not been undertaken to date. This is problematic, particularly when large-scale organizational changes are planned, because it raises the likelihood of unintended, and potentially undesirable, changes to the organization’s culture. Without some form of baseline understanding, it is difficult to understand the nature and degree of such change, or to accurately assess the impact that change has on the “health” of an organization.

1.1 Background

Although not extensive, there exists some literature describing the culture of the CF (e.g., English, 2004; Gosselin, 2005). This body of literature presents military culture as heavily influenced by subcultures (e.g., the Army, Navy, and Air Force cultures), reliant on tradition, tactically and operationally innovative but strategically lacking, and resistant to change. Systematic examinations of Canadian military culture have not appeared in the literature², and common conceptualizations of that culture are therefore heavily influenced by anecdotal and idiosyncratic information and portrayals. The comparable literature describing the culture of DND is confined largely to some small consideration in English’s (2004) *Understanding Military Culture: A Canadian Perspective* (see also the discussion of culture in terms of its impact on command and control processes and structures within the CF and DND in Sharpe & English, 2002), work undertaken through the Defence Management Programme at Queen’s University (e.g., Bland, 1997, 1999; Boulden, 2000), other academic treatments (e.g., Graham, 2002; Wingert, 2002) and some general work on the culture of the Canadian Public Service (for example, see the [Conference Board of Canada](#) website for papers on governance, establishing particular cultural thrusts

¹ The terms “organizational culture” and “corporate culture” will be used interchangeably in this report. Certainly, it is possible to differentiate the terms, but for the purposes of this research, the culture of interest is both organizational (i.e., pertaining to the CF/DND organization) and corporate (i.e., referring to the strategic headquarters level only).

² Some systematic examination of subcultures has appeared, however (e.g., see DGLCD, 2005).

within organizations, managing cultural change, organizational effectiveness, and other topics). This small body of literature generally characterizes the civilian corporate culture as bureaucratic, inflexible, disinterested (or at least uninformed) in defence issues, consensus-dependent, and reactive. There exist, nonetheless, important gaps in the existing literature. A detailed, specific examination of the corporate culture of the CF/DND is one such missing piece.

1.2 Scope of the Research

Times of transition and change are particularly crucial from a cultural perspective. The current transformation initiatives within the CF have introduced important change to the CF, and in response, to DND. Accordingly, it is prudent to reconsider the question of culture, particularly at the most senior levels. Change within the CF, as for most western militaries, is a “top-down” process. Understanding the culture at the top of the hierarchy, therefore, is important for two reasons. First, it is necessarily the first portion of the organization impacted by the kinds of large-scale organizational initiatives that make up CF Transformation. Specifically, initial changes under CF Transformation involved creating new operational commands and re-assignment of authorities and responsibilities across Level 1 organizations; such changes impacted the corporate/strategic levels of the organization long before any strong impact was felt lower in the organizational hierarchy, or outside of the National Capitol Region. Second, examining the culture as the transformation is progressing may suggest factors of importance to success as transformation fully filters down through the organization, and avoid perpetuation of poor choices or approaches.

One major challenge immediately evident in the project was deciding upon a reasonable scope for the research. After determining the scope of projects that had already been undertaken by researchers at various locations within the department, a list of possible targets of inquiry was developed (see McKee, 2004b). The initiation of activities collectively making up CF Transformation occurred at approximately this point in time, creating a context in which culture was viewed as central to all other kinds of organizational change. Upon consideration of various options (e.g., conducting projects similar to the Army Culture Project (DGLCD, 2005) within other natural subgroupings within the CF/DND, such as the Navy, Air Force, Reserves, and civilian groups), the desired focus of inquiry was determined to be the seniormost decision making cadre within the CF and DND. The collocation of these two organizations and the degree to which they are functionally interdependent within National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) suggested that it was impractical to consider the organizations independent of one another. Furthermore, CF Transformation explicitly aimed to develop an integrated culture, although details about the nature and means of achieving this goal were not specified, and such a shift must start at the top of an hierarchical organization like the CF/DND.

The size and complexity of the CF and DND make understanding their culture(s) extremely difficult. This difficulty is compounded by the fact that culture and corporate culture are “slippery” concepts – difficult to define, but intuitively understood (in varying ways) by most people. Organizational culture within both the Canadian military and the Canadian public service is multi-faceted, could be expected to vary by geographic location, is poorly articulated in the literature, and contains subcultures that are also poorly articulated, variable, and multi-faceted. In order to keep the project manageable, it seemed desirable to focus on only one portion of the overall culture of the CF and DND for this study. Corporate culture, in this case the nexus of military and public service culture, is of particular interest at this point in time because of major organizational changes that are being driven from the top of the organizational hierarchy. A poor understanding of the culture at the “top” of an hierarchical organization is likely to preclude a full understanding of the culture(s) lower in the hierarchy. Furthermore, as noted previously, organizational change in the guise of CF Transformation has had (and likely will continue to have, at least in the medium-term) greater visible impact at the strategic/corporate level of the organization than at the tactical/grass-roots level.

Choice of a model of corporate culture as a guiding framework for the investigation was another conceptual challenge to this project. Although a number of models exist, there is a legacy within the CF of working with a model put forward by Edgar Schein (1992). There is general consensus in the scholarly literature that this model works as a descriptive framework, despite its shortcomings as a predictive tool. Schein’s model includes three general “layers” of organizational culture ranging from the most overt/superficial (artifacts) through the most covert/deep (values and beliefs). As one moves through the layers of the model, it becomes increasingly difficult to directly observe the postulated constructs, and these must be inferred from the observable data. Thus, the most overt manifestations of culture (artifacts) may be related to deeper aspects of the organizational culture (e.g., values, beliefs about human nature and organizations), but the links must be inferred by the analyst.

The next section of this report will detail the methodology employed in collecting information about CF/DND corporate culture from the people who are professionally embedded in this layer of the organization (i.e., senior decision makers).

2. Methodology

2.1 Participants

The initially proposed project was confined in scope to Level 1 (L1) decision-makers and a selection of key others in the CF/DND. The Assistant Deputy Minister for Human Resources (Military) (ADM HR-Mil)³ was approached, and agreed, to “champion” the project (i.e., provided his public endorsement of the work and facilitated access to the most senior levels of the CF). The ADM HR-Mil brought this project to the attention of the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), who requested the scope of the project be expanded to include Level 2 (L2) participants also.

The list of organizations invited to participate is presented in Table 1⁴.

Table 1: Organizations Invited to Participate in the Senior Decision Makers Project

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)	DG Aerospace Equipment Program Management (DGAEPM)	DG Public Affairs Programmes and Services (DGPAPS)
Chief of Transformation (CoT)	DG Logistics (DG Log)	DG International Security Policy (DGIS Pol)
Vice Chief of Defence Staff (VCDS)	DG Materiel Systems and Supply Chain (DGMSSC)	DG Realty Policy & Plans (DGRPP)
Deputy Chief of Defence Staff (DCDS)	DG Procurement and Supply (DGProcS)	DG Environment (DGE)
Chief of the Maritime Staff (CMS)	DG Strategic Planning (DGSP)	CF Housing Agency (CFHA)
Chief of the Land Staff (CLS)	DG Strategic Change (DGSC)	DG Financial Management (DGFM)
Chief of the Air Staff (CAS)	DG Reserves and Cadets (DGRC)	DG Financial Operations (DGFO)
ADM Human Resources – Military (ADM HR-Mil)	DG CF Grievance Authority (DGCFGA)	DG Alternative Dispute Resolution (DGAR)
ADM Human Resources – Civilian (ADM HR-Civ)	CF Provost Marshal (CFPM)	Directorate of History and Heritage (DHH)
ADM Policy (ADM Pol)	Director Force Planning and	DG Military Human Resource Policy

³ As part of CF Transformation, there have been some changes to the corporate hierarchy as organizations change in name and, in some cases, span of control. For the purposes of this report, organizations will be referred to by the name that was current at the time of data collection.

⁴ Note that multiple individuals within an organization may have participated, and not all organizations invited to participate accepted the invitation. Organizations are not listed in any particular order.

	Program Coordination (DFPPC)	& Planning (DGMHRPP)
ADM Finance & Corporate Services (ADM Fin CS)	Chief of Defence Intelligence (CDI)	CF Recruiting Group (CFRG)
ADM Infrastructure and Environment (ADM IE)	Canadian Defence Liaison Staff (CDLS)	DG Joint Force Development (DGJFD)
ADM Materiel (ADM Mat)	Canadian Defence Academy (CDA)	Deputy Minister of National Defence (DM)
ADM Science and Technology (ADM S&T)	DG Compensation & Benefits (DGCB)	Judge Advocate General (JAG)
ADM Information Management (ADM IM)	DG Military Careers (DGMC)	CF Ombudsman
ADM Public Affairs (ADM PA)	DG Regional Civilian Human Resource Services (DGRCHRS)	CF Legal Advisor (CFLA)
CF Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA)	Director Strategic Human Resources (D Strat HR)	Chaplain General (Chap Gen)
DG Civilian Employment Strategies & Programs (DGCESP)	Canadian Expeditionary Force Command (CEFCOM)	CF Surgeon General

The seniority and visibility of the population of interest is such that few demographics were collected from the sample in order to avoid identifying individuals. In total, 19 civilian and 26 military participants volunteered to take part in the interviews. It is a matter of public record that the vast majority of the senior decision making cadre within the DND/CF at the time of data collection had been in position only a short time (less than 5 years, most less than 3 years). In terms of gender, 78% of the full sample of interview participants was male. In an effort to cover the full range of perspectives in the corporate culture, individuals in five groups were approached and invited to participate such that coverage of *L1* (Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM)-level), *L2* (Director General (DG)-level), *L3* (below DG-level), *Operators* (individuals primarily concerned with operational commands, Non-commissioned members (NCMs)), and *External* (not part of the regular chain of command, such as the Ombudsman, or higher than L1, such as the Deputy Minister (DM)) groups was accomplished. Individuals within each of these groupings share common characteristics (e.g., scope of functional responsibilities, focus of effort), despite the different mandates of the organizations that are represented within each group.

2.2 Information collection

The dearth of rigorously collected information about the culture of interest (senior decision maker culture within the CF/DND as exemplified at NDHQ) suggested that a qualitative approach to data collection would be most appropriate. Qualitative approaches to data collection include such methodologies as focus groups, interviews,

and open-ended questionnaires. The size of the population of interest, and the multiple demands upon their time were known constraints upon the methodology choice. It was estimated that a maximum of one hour could be asked of participants without seriously jeopardizing the participation rate of the study.

Characteristics of the population, in particular their seniority and the responsibility they bear on behalf of the department and the CF, suggested that individual participation should be structured to encourage honest articulation of thoughts about the culture of senior decision makers by minimizing participants' concerns regarding the appearance of their comments in internal documents or media sources. For this reason, the principal researcher undertook to conduct interviews without recourse to audio or video recording of the interaction. Reliance on notes (taken by an assistant during each interview) and summaries approved by each participant was the selected method of recording data.

The expanded scope of the project required engaging at least one additional interviewer in order to complete the work in a timely fashion. Accordingly, a second researcher was trained in the interview style and approach developed by the principal researcher. In order to accommodate training of a second interviewer, distribute the work appropriately, and minimize errors in interpretation, the initially proposed set of interviews were conducted by the primary researcher, and additional (primarily L2) interviews were undertaken with a slightly later start-date by the second researcher.

Invitations to participate were sent to individuals in the organizations listed in Table 1. No "reminder" invitations were sent out, since the initial invitation solicited an adequate number of positive responses. The final (positive) response rate was 68%, which is quite reasonable for research of this kind. A copy of the invitation to participants, including the basic questions posed during the interviews, is located at Annex A.

The non-restrictive interview structure employed for this research was designed to elicit the maximum possible breadth of content. Learning from the *grounded theory* (Glaser, 1992) approach popular in the sociological literature, the researcher attempted to balance limits on the sample (i.e., a finite number of potential participants in appropriate decision-making positions) with the breadth of content possible when discussing corporate culture. As the scheduled interviews drew to a conclusion, there was a shared sentiment between the two interviewers that the information provided in the final few interviews suggested the breadth of issues pertinent to the target population had been exhausted.

The project was initially approved by the Research Ethics Board (REB) which reports to the Centre for Operational Research and Analysis (CORA) and the Directorate of Military Personnel Strategy (DMP Strat). Expansion of the project to include L2 participants was subsequently approved by the REB also. Notification of ethical approval is located at Annex B.

2.3 Data analysis strategy

In preparation for data analysis, notes from the interviews were transcribed, and narrative summaries of the material constructed. The interviewer (rather than the note-taker) was responsible for preparing the summary from any given interview in order to maximize the extent to which the narrative reflected the full range of each participant's views⁵. Each summary was approximately 1000 words long, and effort was made to adhere as closely as possible to the tone and word choices used by each participant during the interview in constructing the narrative. Participants were given the opportunity to review the summary prepared from their interview, and when changes were requested, these were incorporated prior to including the summary in the data set⁶.

Analysis of the full set of interview narratives was undertaken using a technique most commonly referred to as *thematic analysis* (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The full set of 45 narrative summaries was coded independently by two researchers, after preliminary discussion about the kinds of themes that would be of interest. This coding was performed manually⁷, and a database constructed containing direct reference to the interview narrative material (for cross-referencing purposes) and the theme (central idea) represented by particular comments. Throughout the coding process, the researchers periodically compared their work/approach and determined that they were deriving similar material from the data. No attempt to reach consensus on the interpretation of any given statement was made. The goal of the analysis was to derive the maximum amount of information from the summary interview material as possible, rather than to quantify the number of times any particular theme was raised by participants. Scrutiny of early interview summaries and later ones did not reveal any discrepancies in length of interviews, amount of content offered, or breadth of topics covered. Furthermore, the final 15-20% of interviews did not bring up new topics or ideas about the corporate culture, suggesting that an information saturation point had been reached.

Some would argue that the data analysis method employed introduces inordinate amounts of bias and interpretive error into the analysis. Counter to this position is the notion of participant observation (wherein the researcher is an active participant in the context under study, and can therefore interpret that context in a more sensitive way that extends beyond the surface of material obtained through other formal

⁵ Interviewers were better able to focus on understanding the content of each participant's contribution in context because they were not distracted by the physical activity of recording the information.

⁶ Changes made to the summaries by participants consisted of minor word changes or clarifications that did not substantively alter the content of the summaries as prepared from interview notes. Participants who did not respond to the invitation to review their summaries were considered to be providing tacit approval of the content.

⁷ Software does exist that would have facilitated this task, but for a variety of reasons unrelated to the usefulness of the software or the nature of the research, this software was not available to the researchers.

methodologies, such as interviews), and the cumulative evidence that emerges from the reports of multiple participants. Furthermore, the nature of the project is such that it provides a baseline or starting point for further empirical exploration that will permit confirmation/disconfirmation of the conclusions drawn in the initial study.

The remainder of this report presents the findings from this analysis. The nature of the data, and of the concept of culture itself, is reflected in the recursive nature of the presentation of findings. In an effort to derive the maximum of useful information from the data, three conceptual models are presented that describe the corporate culture of the CF/DND through slightly different lenses. First, the material provided by participants is presented thematically in a model of the corporate culture as it is experienced. Second, an emergent model of the corporate culture focusing on the interaction dynamics of the major groups of participants in the culture is presented. Finally, the material from the two previous models (descriptive themes, emergent model) is applied to the Schein (1992) model of organizational culture. Use of a framework derived from the academic literature provides a different way of articulating the information obtained from the interview participants, and provides a framework for analyzing those aspects of the corporate culture that are neither overt nor easily articulated by individuals living within the culture. Some general conclusions and recommendations for the way ahead are provided following the presentation of results.

3. Results and Discussion

The nature of the data used for analysis (summaries constructed from hand notes and approved by participants) precludes the inclusion of direct quotations from participants. Nonetheless, thematic analysis of the interview summaries did reveal a number of recurring themes in the data, and multiple models did emerge with sufficient detail to permit plausible interpretations of various aspects of the underlying corporate culture. These will be detailed in the sections to follow.

Layers of culture are not neatly discrete from one another. Surface manifestations of underlying beliefs and values are definitionally related to one another. An effort has been made to separate various themes and topic areas for the purposes of discussion clarity, but it must be recognized that culture can only be understood in *gestalt* terms – that is, critical examinations of elements of the culture are insufficient for a full understanding of the culture as it exists in the world. In other words, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The discussion that follows will reflect the interconnectedness of different aspects of culture, and some topics will be raised multiple times: Different facets of the same themes have different pertinence, depending upon the aspect of culture that is being examined.

The first of the three models to be discussed is grounded explicitly in material provided by interview participants.

3.1 Culture as Experienced/Described

Organizational culture is often confused with organizational climate (McKee, 2004). Organizational climate deals more directly with members' day-to-day perceptions of various aspects of the organization, such as decision-making, leadership, and work performance (Harrison & Shikom, 1999). The more immediate and visible nature of these aspects of the corporate context made it inevitable that interview participants would comment on such factors. In addition, culture is sometimes (mistakenly) thought to be captured in sufficient detail by examinations of organizational structures and reporting relationships. Organizational structure describes the “official” ways in which business is conducted, but fails to address the “unofficial” ways of getting the work done. Neither climate nor structure considerations make any attempt to understand the underlying causes for behaviours and organizational choices, which are often rooted in organizational culture. Although it may seem a semantic nicety, it is important to distinguish between organizational climate, structure, and culture from a practical perspective, because change efforts directed at the incorrect target are unlikely to produce desired effects. Both climate and structure are related to culture, but they are not equivalent concepts. Efforts to change organizational culture that do not extend below the most superficial levels (e.g., artifacts), or that impact only

climate and structure, can have no more reasonable expectation of success than someone changing their clothes and expecting a fundamental change in the personality of the person wearing them.

Consistent with expectations, direct descriptions of the corporate culture were primarily comprised of descriptions of the working climate and general characterizations of the working environment (participants used descriptive terms such as collegial, positive, tolerant, dynamic, healthy, responsive, reflexive, inflexible, process-oriented, organizationally focused, results oriented, and risk-averse), collections of metaphorical frameworks (e.g., warrior culture, “team” of decision makers, military service as a “higher calling” or vocation), and frequently referred to change orientation and time as defining factors.

When asked to describe the corporate culture directly, all participants chose positive descriptive terms. This “positivity” bias was sometimes countered by use of less positive clarifying statements. For individuals working within the highest levels of the corporate culture, there is a general perception that the culture is largely positive, at least at the level of surface descriptions. Of equal interest, however, is the observation that most every participant was also able to articulate negative aspects of the culture or of the experience of living within the culture without losing the overall sense of positivity.

The general observation that the corporate culture of the CF/DND is a positive one is heartening. The discrepancy between this generally positive characterization of the corporate culture and the consistency of participants’ willingness and ability to discuss less positive aspects of the culture, however, is somewhat puzzling. Two plausible explanations for this apparent discrepancy suggest themselves. First, the researchers and note takers were civilian and junior in experience and rank/equivalence to interview participants (with the exception of two interviews for which the note-taker was a military officer and in uniform during the interview. In these two cases, the interview participants were of superior rank/equivalence to the military officer taking notes). It is plausible that the researchers were perceived as being part of the “out group” (i.e., not resident within the senior decision making cadre), and were therefore shown only the version of reality shared with outsiders. This explanation is less satisfactory, however, when considering the fact that no substantial variation in the positivity message was evident for individuals at different levels in the corporate hierarchy. A second explanation draws on the same conceptual basis (in/out groups), but casts the corporate culture as one group, and the external environment (other government departments, Canadian society, other organizations, and so on) makes up the “out group”. This line of reasoning includes the researchers as part of the “in” group, suggests that the positive reports provided describe the corporate culture faithfully, and demonstrates the degree to which individuals throughout the corporate culture perceive themselves to be contributing as a collective towards achieving organizational goals. This version of the explanation fits better with

the general pattern of responses observed, and is consistent with the ideals of CF Transformation, suggesting that at least some of the principles outlined by the CDS have been internalized (e.g., the notion of an integrated “team” with a common mandate), at least by senior decision makers within the corporate culture.

3.1.1 Conceptual model of the culture as experienced

Within the summary data, a pattern of information emerged revealing that individuals within the corporate culture find a number of aspects of the culture particularly salient. Specifically, the interviews revealed commentary that can be grouped into three interdependent, embedded conceptual domains: people, politics, and geography. Each of these domains was also associated with multiple thematic areas, some of which blurred the boundaries between the conceptual domains. The embedded nature of cultural facets is depicted in Figure 1. The oblong portions of the figure represent groupings of issues as raised during the interviews. The arrows in this figure represent the cross-cutting nature of some factors, such as communication, that impact upon all individuals within the culture, but which manifest differently, depending upon the focus of consideration.

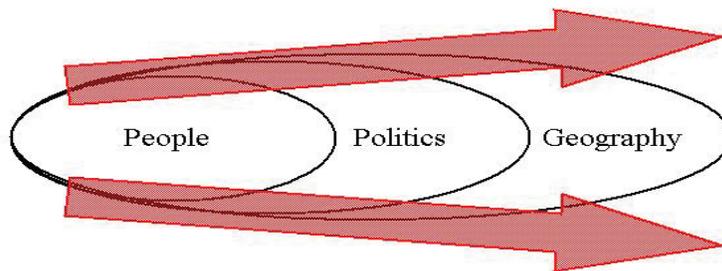


Figure 1: Embedded nature of cultural facets emerging from the data.

3.1.2 People

Not surprisingly, interview participants spoke of people as the most salient feature of the corporate culture. In general, those aspects of the corporate culture that are perceived to be directly impacted by individuals have been

grouped together as “people” factors. For the purposes of the model presented in Figure 1, themes that have been grouped together under the rubric of “people” include leadership and management, communication, trust, competence and respect, secrecy and transparency, stovepipes (or silos), formality and informality, and the impact of the personal qualities of senior leaders on the corporate culture.

3.1.2.1 Leadership and Management.

Interview participants clearly articulated their expectations of organizational leaders. Many participants suggested that senior organizational leaders should act as role models of desired organizational behaviours, and expressed a preference for a more directive style of leadership (vs. a primarily consensually-based, participative style). Consistent with the desire for more directive leadership, most participants (military and civilian) expressed a desire to be consulted on issues, then issued with unambiguous direction and sufficient authority to act. In particular, the desire for clear direction and guidance, and for appropriately placed accountability (i.e., not solely resident within the most senior layers of the organizational hierarchy) was explicitly noted. Frustration was expressed when organizational leaders fail to delegate appropriately, either keeping particular tasks and responsibilities to themselves, or passing them to subordinates but engaging in unnecessary oversight that constrains subordinates’ ability to act (i.e., micromanaging).

Some participants made a distinction between leadership and management, with leadership being viewed as a military competency, and management as a civilian competency. Regardless of who the leader is (i.e., whether military or civilian), however, many interview participants expressed an expectation of strong performance in both domains from senior organizational leaders. One gap in the preparation of senior organizational leaders (particularly for civilians) was identified as the lack of a consistent, purposeful development programme that would ensure better prepared individuals to perform leadership functions⁸ at the top of the organizational hierarchy. This gap was noted primarily by participants within the L1 cadre, suggesting some discomfort on the part of individuals at this organizational level with their ability to meet expectations of highly competent leadership within the corporate culture⁹.

⁸ For a fuller discussion of leadership functions and competencies in the context of the Canadian Forces and Department of National Defence, see the model of leadership developed at the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (CFLI 2007a, 2007b; DND, 2005).

⁹ This interpretation is further substantiated by the recent promulgation of a new, and evolving, leadership development curriculum specifically designed to meet the development needs of senior civilians (Poliquin, 2006).

Leadership style was also notably different between civilian and military participant groups. The predominant style of leadership on the part of military participants is the command style taught to all military personnel over the course of their career. Reliant upon a formal chain of command, predicated on an expectation of compliance once a decision has been made, and codified in such things as the use of language (acronyms) and writing styles (official formats of all kinds), leadership as practiced by senior military personnel has a highly directive quality well suited to the operational needs of the CF.

Civilians, on the other hand, often bring with them a more political, indirect, and consensually determined style of leadership that is presumably common across many government departments. Many participants noted that with prolonged exposure to the corporate culture, there is a tendency for civilians to move more towards a military-style approach to leadership and decision making, suggesting adoption of some aspects of the military culture to facilitate and enhance civilian leader performance within the corporate culture. Similar movement on the part of military leaders toward a more consensual approach was not noted with the same frequency, although several participants did articulate the difficulties posed by adapting to consensually based approaches for military leaders (i.e., their lack of comfort or facility with this kind of approach and the disconnect between command and consensus as means of arriving at a decision). Participants did not articulate a shared understanding of how the command and consensus styles can be mutually reinforcing, suggesting that the impact of friction between these styles outweighs their synergy in the corporate culture.

3.1.2.2 Communication.

Communication as an individual ability falls into the category of “people” issues within the corporate culture. Language choice (e.g., English/French, expressions, word choices, metaphors), the use of codified communications (e.g., CANFORGENS), the willingness of individuals to engage in open communication with colleagues, subordinates, and superiors, the integrity of messages (e.g., the degree to which some messages are “spun” for particular audiences), and the meanings attached to particular communications were raised by participants as powerful controllers of behaviour in the corporate culture. The consistent desire for better communication was noted by all participants, although this was typically viewed as something that “others” could improve upon (rather than being viewed as a personal improvement goal). Further reference to issues of communication will be discussed as a cross-cutting theme (see section 3.1.5.1).

3.1.2.3 Trust, Competence and Respect.

Issues of trust were raised in multiple ways during the interviews. The impact of mistrust within the corporate culture was viewed, without exception, as

negative. Several explanations for a lack of trust within the corporate culture were put forward, including: the lack of resources that sometimes confronts organizations, creating a climate of competition and suspicion; a lack of collective focus, leading to uncoordinated activity; the scarcity of contexts for forming cross-group relationships; failure to consistently consider benefits of shared solutions to common issues (vs. preference for individualized, stove-piped solutions); perceived suspicion between military and civilian groups with respect to competence, loyalty, and commitment to the CF/DND mandate; and over-control at the highest levels of the organizational hierarchy, as manifested in a reluctance to delegate, to communicate effectively down the chain of command, and to devolve authorities to appropriate organizational levels. Participants viewed opportunities to work together, to train/learn together, and to directly observe individuals as the primary mechanisms for enhancing trust, and suggested that developing trust is the main mechanism for bridging the military-civilian gap.

Credibility and respect are grounded in trust (including assumptions of individual and group competence, motivation, and loyalty). Individuals report an inconsistently fulfilled desire to have their qualifications and credentials appreciated by their colleagues. This is particularly true across the boundary between civilians and military members. The highly structured career progression of military officers provides a common frame of understanding regarding competencies that can be expected to reside within individuals at particular rank levels, for example, but there is no analogue for civilians. Reinforcing this interpretation (i.e., trust developed via reliance on assumptions grounded in common experience), some military participants noted that there is mutual respect across environmental (Army, Navy, Air Force) lines, despite historical competition for resources. Opportunities for observation across cultural subgroup lines, working together, and senior leader acknowledgement of the similarity of qualifications, effort, and ability of individuals in and out of uniform were strategies for developing credibility articulated in the course of the interviews.

3.1.2.4 Secrecy and Transparency

Some individuals experience the corporate culture as appropriately open and transparent, although the majority of participants espoused a rather less contented view. The tendency to keep information contained and the lack of consultation with all interested parties when major organizational change initiatives (e.g., CF Transformation) are developed were two frustrations for many participants, both military and civilian. When discussing transparency, the corporate culture was described as risk-averse by many participants. The perception that perfect decisions are required in combat contexts (because of the potential for loss of life), resulting in a conservative/cautious approach to decision-making, was one explanation offered. Other participants spoke to the

lack of clear accountability frameworks as an explanatory factor, insofar as individuals may be loathe to take risks if the consequences of failure are not well articulated and are therefore prone to exaggerated speculation. The uncertainty imposed on the organization as a result of major change initiatives (i.e., CF Transformation and related activities) may have made this issue more salient for participants than it might be at other points in time. The “cult of secrecy” notion also was discussed by some participants, both military and civilian, consistently in the sense that such an approach erodes confidence in organizational leaders (internally) and in the organization itself (to external audiences).

3.1.2.5 Stovepipes¹⁰

One of the issues raised most frequently by participants was the development, perpetuation, and frustration associated with a “stove-piped” mentality. Multiple stovepipes (or silos, as some participants preferred to call them) were identified, including the three military environments (Army, Navy, Air Force) and individual (L1 and L2) sub-organizations (others, such as specific military branches, were also mentioned). The tendency to consider one’s own sub-organization (vs. a pan-CF/DND view) in isolation may undermine confidence in senior decision makers’ ability to make decisions that benefit the whole of the CF/DND. Several participants noted the preference for “in-house” solutions developed for particular sub-organizations (e.g., desire for technological solutions that are specific to an individual group’s articulated needs, but that do not facilitate cross-organization alignment, communication, and cooperation), and commented on the additional difficulty such preferences pose for the development of horizontal organizational processes and problem solutions.

Resource and “turf” protection and competition for prestige and influence were cited as the main factors perpetuating existing stovepipes within the CF/DND. The pervasiveness of stovepipes and the habits of thinking associated with stovepipes were flagged as issues of concern for many senior decision makers, not least because of the incompatibility of this mentality with the (CF Transformation) principle of a pan-CF identity and with the shift towards joint capability development. Participants expressed a desire to contribute fully to the mandate of the CF/DND, but reported difficulties coordinating their efforts, not least as a result of stovepiped approaches to solution generation and capability development. A wide variety of organizational initiatives (e.g., seamless transfers between regular and reserve forces, deployment of civilians to operational contexts, common information

¹⁰ Although arguably tied to organizational structures, at least in terms of their development, stovepipes are included as a “people” factor because the habits of thinking (an individual attribute) associated with stovepipes were the most important aspect of stovepiping discussed by interview participants.

and knowledge management processes and architectures) were mentioned as illustrative of the difficulties stovepipes can impose on senior decision makers.

3.1.2.6 Formality and Informality

Many participants noted a surface difference between military and civilian “cultures” on the basis of formality, with the military culture perceived as the more formal of the two (e.g., use of rank rather than given names when interacting in a group, dress/office uniforms, codified behaviour such as saluting, highly courteous styles of interaction). Many civilians expressed comfort with this formality, and noted its difference from the much less formal styles and cultures of some other government departments. Participants also observed that formality between organizational layers (both functional levels and rank groups) is typical, but within layers, informality is the norm.

The other context in which formality was raised as an issue revolved around the formal (vs. informal) means of communicating and accomplishing goals that occurs within the corporate culture. Reference, particularly at the L2 level, was made to the relative efficacy of formal and informal communications, with the perception being that informal (“corridor” or “back-channel”) discussions are much more impactful than some more formal communications (e.g., during meetings). Similarly, informal “alliances” (i.e., informal agreements about mutual support that are largely issue-specific) between decision makers were viewed as enabling progress when formal channels were unable to move a given issue or initiative forward. Some participants expressed concern at the degree to which they have observed informal approaches used to conduct business within the corporate culture, because this approach tends to work counter to accountability and transparency principles.

3.1.2.7 Impact of Individual Personalities

Individual difference variables (e.g., character, personal style, personality, competence) were clearly identified by participants as having a strong impact upon the culture. Both military and civilian participants expressed confidence in the degree to which the current senior decision making cadre is comprised of competent, knowledgeable, committed individuals. Belief in the vital importance of a good “fit” between person and position at the top of the organizational hierarchy was also clear in the data. Sensitivity to the nuances of the corporate culture was one factor perceived to contribute to successful performance on the part of organizational leaders. Other success factors included intelligence, the ability to learn quickly, breadth of experience, self-confidence, integrity, competence, and personal courage. Several participants noted the importance of self-selection into the culture, particularly for civilians¹¹, because of the perceived requirement to fully internalize the

¹¹ Military members did not indicate a sense of agency in taking up senior decision maker positions (i.e., there was no mention made of aspiring to positions of organizational leadership for military

mandate of the CF in order to function successfully as a leader in the CF/DND. The pace of personnel changes within the corporate culture (particularly for those in uniform, due to the posting cycles of the CF) could make the impact of individuals on the organization more visible than in other contexts.

3.1.2.8 Suggestions for Improvements

Participants endorsed, in principle, the idea of a defence/security professional as a potential means of developing a cadre of non-uniformed, highly informed group of individuals who would be comfortable with, and could have substantial impact on, the corporate culture. Recognition of the fully integrated (military/civilian, CF/DND) nature of the corporate culture requires reinforcing that requirement for an integrated focus of effort also. A purely operational or departmental focus would leave substantial performance gaps that ultimately would be detrimental to the organization. The corporate culture, to the extent that it promotes and supports integrated work, contributes to the overall mission of the CF/DND in important ways. Where integrated work is not supported by the culture, however, difficulties can be expected. A cadre of purposefully developed, defence specialists with a professional orientation and commitment to a richly developed career in the national security domain is the logical extension of the “defence professional” idea many participants endorsed.

3.1.3 Politics

The second element of the thematic model, politics, refers to issues raised by participants that are linked to organizational circumstances that constrain individual behaviour and perceptions (often by external parties) of organizational behaviour. Politics, in the sense intended here, refers to “small-p” politics, rather than to specific attributes of the federal political system. Under the conceptual domain of “politics”, participants raised issues of identity, uniqueness and complexity, organizational structures and processes, the relationship between the CF and society, public perceptions of the military and public relations geared toward shaping those perceptions, legislative frameworks, and the perspectives of insiders and outsiders about the CF and DND.

3.1.3.1 Identity

Participants were very aware of the CF Transformation principle requiring the adoption of a “CF identity” rather than an environment-specific identity. There was evidence of two schools of thought in response to this requirement. Not

members), perhaps as a function of the commonly expressed perception that taking on roles in the corporate culture of NDHQ is a form of “penance” for military members.

surprisingly, many military participants expressed discomfort at the notion of “losing” environmental identities, and skepticism that an integrated CF identity is an achievable goal. The barriers to attaining a CF identity articulated by participants included the perceived failure of an integrated identity to reflect the importance, traditions, and value of existing environmental identities; the perceived importance of environmental identities to operational effectiveness; the relative scarcity of opportunities over the course of a military career to train in an integrated fashion that would support the creation of an integrated CF identity¹²; and fear about the (unknown) impact on the self-concept and culture of military members of such a shift. Other participants, both military and civilian, viewed the notion of a CF identity as a positive step towards strengthening the public image of the CF, and reinforcing the idea of a common “front” presented by the CF and DND in dealings with other government departments (OGDs). There was also a sense on the part of some participants (primarily civilian) that the development of a CF identity could facilitate a more inclusive culture that would value civilian contributions to military effectiveness more substantively, although the mechanisms for such a shift were not specified. Issues of civilian identity within DND were conspicuously absent, suggesting a different relationship between individuals and the organization for civilians as compared to military participants.

The dichotomy between military and civilian groups was perhaps the most obvious dynamic/factor to emerge from the interview material. All participants raised this issue in one form or another. The tendency to group people in terms of their (in the CF/DND context, visible) membership in one of two, primary categories in the organizational context has consequences for how each group thinks of the other, and for the relationship between them. In the psychological literature, the tendency to engage in evaluations of “in” groups and “out” groups is viewed as basic human social behaviour. Framing the experience of interview participants in this fashion helps explain the clear division that was evident between military and civilian participants. For example, according to a model put forward by Mussweiler and Bodenhausen (2002), when individuals are asked to evaluate out-group members (e.g., what are perceptions of civilians by military members – an implicit interview question), self-evaluations are more general and focus on contrasting self from other. Furthermore, the comparison appears to happen spontaneously, resulting in a malleable sense of self (varying whenever the concept “self” is made salient through social comparison). Arguably, though beyond the findings of the studies presented in this article, the self concept could become more rigidly defined with repeated comparisons with the same out-group, since those

¹² The notion of military identity as a created identity (vs. a naturally occurring propensity of some individuals in the population), achieved through training, common experience, and indoctrination was raised as an undisputed reality when it was articulated at all.

comparisons might solidify individuals' self-concept (repeatedly thinking of oneself in a particular way because one is dealing with the same comparison group may encourage people to make "cognitive short-cuts" by solidifying the repeatedly activated comparison outcome). The implication of this reasoning is that the gap between military and civilians can only be overcome (or substantially diminished) by making commonalities more salient to individuals than differences between the groups. Similarly, development of a "CF identity" is most likely to be achieved by minimizing consideration of differences between the environments, and by emphasizing their similarities.

3.1.3.2 Uniqueness and Complexity.

The blended (military/civilian) workforce within the corporate culture makes NDHQ an unique context within the CF/DND. Military and civilian participants addressed specific aspects of uniqueness differently, however. Military participants accepted the CF's uniqueness within the corporate culture as natural, as deriving from the notion of unlimited liability, and as distinctive within both the corporate and the broader governmental context. Civilians agreed that the corporate culture is distinctive in the federal government context, but had some difficulty defining what specifically makes the corporate culture unique. Several made note of the adoption of military-style approaches to management (i.e., more directive in style, less consensually-based decision making, more formal interpersonal relationships) as contributing to the uniqueness of the CF/DND within the broader government context. Both military and civilian participants suggested that the adoption of a common mandate (support for operations) was a critical factor binding the CF and DND together and contributing to the distinctiveness of the corporate culture as compared to others. The ability to align the CF and DND in their articulation of the uniqueness of the organization was viewed by some participants as a critical factor in maintaining credibility for the organization in its dealings with other government departments and the broader society.

Both military and civilian participants also agreed that the complexity of the CF/DND is a function of the size of the organization (i.e., DND is the largest federal government department) and the variety of responsibilities resident within the organization (e.g., the provision of a full spectrum of services to military members and their families, the breadth of service delivery issues that arise from the dispersion of personnel across the globe, and the variety of threats the CF must be prepared to handle). Complexity also stems from the organizational tradition of always doing more, but rarely ceasing an activity once undertaken, resulting in a complex web of processes and structures within the organization.

3.1.3.3 Structures and Processes.

Participants' comments revolved around both the ways in which organizational structures and processes impact upon the rhythm of work in the corporate culture and the degree to which structures and processes constrain individuals, both military and civilian. The rhythm of work impacts were evident in participant comments about information and workflow bottlenecks that inevitably arise when direct communication across multiple levels of the organizational hierarchy is not the norm. Bottlenecks due to rigid reliance on the chain of command were perceived as problematic, particularly among L2 participants. Both military and civilian participants raised the reduced ability of subordinates to have a voice in organizational decisions (due to their location within the organizational hierarchy), delays in decision-making, and the need for better alignment between organizational structures/processes and publicly announced organizational vision as constraints on their performance as decision makers in the corporate culture.

There was an appreciation on the part of participants, also, that changing organizational structures does not in any way guarantee change to the fundamental corporate culture. Reporting relationships and spans of control can influence the culture, but practices and processes in use have perhaps even greater impact on the culture than do organizational structures. The posting system (for military personnel), for example, was raised as both a positive process (providing for individual development, enhanced breadth of understanding, and continuous supply of new perspectives) and a systemic irritant (continuous turnover of personnel requires constant retraining, individual members may not feel sense of control over postings and/or perform poorly if they are not well-suited to a particular position). Importantly, the value of the chain of command/organizational hierarchy was not questioned, and these structures were viewed as mechanisms for building accountability into the system and for maximally supporting operations.

Governance, as a general topic, was raised by some participants as an area of concern. At the time of the interviews, governance structure changes expected under CF Transformation had not been finalized, heightening levels of uncertainty within the corporate culture. Desired changes included a shift in focus from process to output, reduced numbers of committees, and substantially clarified accountability and responsibility definitions and expectations.

3.1.3.4 The CF and Canadian Society.

Military participants were particularly sensitive (compared to civilian participants) to the impact of broader cultural changes on the future of the CF.

In particular, there was concern expressed that changes in attitudes and values in the broader social context will pose increasing challenges to the military in the future, as more recruits enter the organization with attitudes and values that are counter to the military ethos. In particular, the emphasis on personal entitlements, the tendency to question everything, and perceived lack of appreciation for a cause that is greater than individual considerations were noted. The friction between publicly supported peace-keeping roles and militarily-preferred war-fighting roles was articulated also. Although not directly discernible from the current data, it is plausible that military resistance to increased civilian influence within the CF/DND is in part grounded in concerns that such influence will undermine the war-fighting ethos of the CF and potentially constrain military participation to peace-keeping duties on future deployments.

3.1.3.5 Public Perceptions of the CF and Public Relations

Participants at all organizational levels were acutely aware of the importance of public support for the CF as a critical component for organizational success. Comments from many participants dealt with the importance of overcoming negative perceptions grounded in the scandals of the 1990s and early 21st century (Somalia, in particular), the importance of working with the media in order to develop and maintain public support, and the pride that public support for the work of the CF imparts to individual soldiers, sailors and air(wo)men. Some participants viewed the media as the most important tool at the disposal of the CF/DND for generating an understanding of the Canadian military in order to solidify and maintain public support. Other avenues for enhancing public understanding of the roles and identity of the CF included informal (individual) outreach into local communities. This was considered particularly challenging within the corporate culture, however, because of work-related constraints (workload, hours of work), and because the local context (Ottawa) was perceived as difficult to engage with informally (i.e., some participants perceived few opportunities to become involved with the local community). The pride expressed by most participants due to their perception of being involved in meaningful and important work is a possible explanation for the importance accorded to public perceptions by many participants. That is, the positive social comparison and feedback permitted by such public recognition may be one mechanism contributing to the sense of pride in service articulated by both military and civilian participants.

3.1.3.6 Legislative Frameworks.

The complexity of the federal government system is a challenge for the corporate culture. The majority of military participants indicated some discomfort with working in the bureaucratic context of government (particularly early in their tenure at NDHQ), and perceived a knowledge gap in terms of their understanding of the broader government context. Civilian

participants typically echoed the concerns about military understanding of the broader legislative context. Particularly at the L1 level, civilian participants described a large part of their role in the corporate culture as filling the gap between the CF and the broader government context. Some legislative and policy frameworks are difficult to work within for military purposes, perhaps because they are not consistently developed with a conscious effort to maintain alignment with existing frameworks (both internal and external). A few participants indicated that the civilian role of liaising with other government departments is not consistently utilized to best advantage, and suggested that more military postings into other government departments would further facilitate the desired alignment.

3.1.3.7 The Importance of Perspective.

Not surprisingly, interview participants further removed from the center of the corporate culture generally held different views of it than did participants situated within it. External perceptions of the corporate culture tended to view it as largely self-contained and not open to external examination – this was viewed as appropriate and normal, rather than as a problem. The notion of transparency does not extend to expectations of understanding the corporate culture of the CF/DND (financial and policy transparency were viewed as more important). Most interesting was that relative newcomers to decision-making and influence positions within the corporate culture (e.g., NCMs, arms-length agencies), reported a keen interest in becoming more engaged, in having their skills and value recognized, and in contributing substantively to corporate activities, at least insofar as the interview participants from these groups are representative of the larger groups from which they are drawn.

A different manifestation of the importance of perspective relates back to the previous section, and the reported discomfort of some military members with their degree of understanding of the broader federal government context. It is worth noting that the differences in the development of military and civilian personnel establish different expectations about what it means to “understand”. Military members are immersed in the military culture¹³ for long periods of time before coming to the corporate context as senior decision makers. With such complete exposure, a sense of understanding the organization (in this case, the CF) is bound to develop that has no analogue for civilians. In comparison, even substantial knowledge about the broader government context may be perceived as inadequate in comparison to the degree to which military personnel feel they understand the CF.

¹³ Immersion in this case may be total, insofar as many military members “live” the military culture 24/7 by virtue of the housing and support systems and traditional social networks that exist for military personnel, whereas their civilian counterparts are immersed in the work culture of the public service only a portion of the time.

3.1.3.8 Suggestions for Improvements.

Friction related to issues grouped here under politics might benefit from enhanced liaison programmes and other forms of “cross-pollination”, creating more formalized bridges between the CF/DND and the external environment. Civilian participants, in particular, expressed the belief that such bridges are valuable to their performance within the corporate culture, and also provide a vehicle for “exporting” some of the extremely effective approaches (e.g., best practices in planning, team coordination) espoused by the CF/DND. The importance of such bridges for maintaining appropriate alignment between the CF/DND and other parts of the government and society is particularly evident when the external political landscape is in a state of flux (as during elections, for example). There is a perception among some interview participants that there is safety and security in alliances and common understandings between government departments under such circumstances.

3.1.4 Geography

The essential tension between National Defence Headquarters and units elsewhere (both in Canada and on deployment) was raised by all participants in terms of the perception that NDHQ and elsewhere are insensitive to the demands of the other’s environment. Geography, in the sense it is used here, refers to the impact of the physical distance that separates the corporate culture from the rest of the CF/DND. The gap may be physical, but its manifestations within the corporate culture are inextricably tied to human behaviour. The chasm between NDHQ and other locations manifests within the corporate culture as a function of the incompatibility of command and consensus styles of decision making, the frequently noted gap between policy and implementation, and the inadequate preparation individuals reported feeling they received before taking up senior positions within the NDHQ hierarchy.

3.1.4.1 Command and Consensus.

Although not exclusively the case, military participants expressed an appreciation for consensus building in decision making cycles that was not echoed by civilians, who expressed an appreciation for the efficiency of a command approach. Both groups agreed, however, that a bureaucratic environment cannot be led using a command-centric style. Specifically, participants noted that the complexity of issues and the civil-military personnel mix at the corporate level require much more collaborative approaches than are typical of operational command styles. Both military and civilian participants expressed frustration, however, when consensus building is used as a tool to delay decisions, to prolong discussion about unpopular decisions, or to provide a smokescreen to prevent public awareness/acknowledgement of a less participative style of decision making. The essential tension between an

operations-focused (command-centric) mentality and a bureaucratic (consensus-seeking) mentality highlights the value of co-locating the CF and DND at the strategic level. Without prolonged exposure to the two approaches to decision making, the gulf between NDHQ and the nationally and internationally dispersed military personnel would be even greater as mismatched timelines and approaches to policy implementation would exacerbate the existing friction between those in Ottawa and organizational members in other locations.

3.1.4.2 Policy-Implementation Gap

Multiple issues were raised with respect to policy and its implementation. Formulation of policy was described as lacking in consultation with key stakeholders, based on sound theory but divorced from ground reality, inadequately aligned with existing policies, not adequately balancing individual and collective rights, and too often grounded in unchecked assumptions. Legislated requirements were sometimes viewed as inimical or counter to operational effectiveness (e.g., Official Languages policy that is concerned solely with English and French proficiency is inconsistent with the linguistic requirements of many deployed contexts, and compliance takes up training time that could be utilized preparing soldiers, sailors and air personnel for operations).

Participants in the L1 category were particularly sensitive to the gap that sometimes occurs between policy and implementation. Difficulties with implementation were attributed to failure to align new and existing policies, lack of clarity with respect to the role of the environments as translators of policy into environment-specific terms, lack of clarity in communicating policy intent throughout the organization, the assumption that policies should be “one size fits all”, lack of clarity regarding accountability for implementation failures, and lack of evaluation. The reluctance of military personnel to question the chain of command was suggested as one reason why implementation strays from the intent of some policy, insofar as interpretations are made without seeking clarification from policy developers. Misalignment between strategy, vision, and policy also was cited as a complicating factor. It is plausible that military personnel, accustomed to operating somewhat autonomously under “commanders intent”, work from an assumption and expectation set that does not reflect the assumptions and expectations of policy developers.

3.1.4.3 Preparation for Roles in the Corporate Culture

The inherent unpredictability of operational contexts has led military members to develop in particular ways. The strategic-level interface with the government and bureaucracy of the federal system, however, operates on a different time-scale and requires competencies that are not easily acquired on

operations. The choice the military has often made in promoting operationally experienced officers and NCMs to positions within the strategic/corporate culture has not consistently succeeded in preparing individuals to take up positions in that culture. Many military participants expressed dismay at their early exposure to the corporate culture, and the extent to which they felt unable to work easily within it. Many military participants suggested that it is important to experience the corporate culture at a relatively early point in a military career (e.g., at the rank of Major/Lieutenant Commander) before returning later in one's career to take up senior decision making responsibilities. Experiences outside of NDHQ are not viewed as adequate preparation for senior decision maker roles within the corporate culture, partially because NDHQ is perceived as an unique context within the CF/DND. Some military participants also suggested that salient factors in the corporate culture, particularly the close working relationships between CF personnel and civilian personnel, do not exist outside of the corporate environment (i.e., civilians in other contexts often are not in positions of similar prestige or seniority as military members).

3.1.4.4 Suggestions for Improvements.

Participants recognized the value of interpersonal networks as a means of accomplishing organizational goals that require extension beyond the bounds of NDHQ. Further, the importance of postings (job changes, for civilians) as a method for securing breadth of exposure and experience, particularly in contexts beyond the CF/DND, was noted as a critical developmental experience for senior decision makers in the CF/DND corporate culture. The frustration and lack of comfort expressed by military members dealing with the culture of Ottawa and with the federal government would be eased by increasing the exposure of these individuals to other government departments. Civilian interview participants, particularly at the L1 level, were explicit in describing the value they perceive to the breadth of experience they bring with them to the CF/DND context. This value was echoed in comments from military participants describing the benefits of an integrated (military/civilian) corporate culture.

3.1.5 Cross-cutting themes

Communication, change, and time were raised as factors impacting the corporate culture in important ways, some of which have been alluded to in the preceding descriptions of the interview material. Furthermore, each of these factors is described differently with respect to the three conceptual domains described above (people, politics, geography). Articulation of difference was the predominant descriptive tool used by interview participants in their responses to questions about the corporate culture.

3.1.5.1 Communication

The overwhelming amount of information that is brought before senior decision makers imposes challenges in terms of processing and utilizing the information appropriately. It also poses a challenge in terms of deciding what should be passed to subordinates, peers, and superiors, and the form that communication should take (verbal, written, electronic, hard-copy, formal, informal). Although all participants recognized the value of good communication, there was no indication that concerted efforts are put forth to ensure that senior decision makers (and personnel throughout the organization) are provided with training and support to improve communication skills. Some particularly effective mechanisms for communication were highlighted, including organizational leaders speaking to large gatherings (e.g., town halls), consistent messages in written media sources (both internal and external), and face-to-face interactions with senior leaders (e.g., meetings, briefings, retreats). Factors that may decrease the quality of communications were also articulated, including distortion of messages by (meeting) minutes takers, lack of shared/common understanding (e.g., multiple meanings attributed to the same words/phrases, excessive use of acronyms), over-reliance on informal channels for passing information, inconsistent messages, inconsistent use of all available media for communicating, fear of repercussions (e.g., for challenging the chain of command, or pushing unpopular information up the chain), the culture of secrecy (e.g., information hoarding, improper classification of documents), and lack of opportunities for open discussion about issues. As others, such as members of the intelligence community (e.g., Thompson, 2006), have found in their own contexts, there is an urgent requirement to move from a “need to know” mentality to a “need to share” mentality. Such a shift in the communication domain will have repercussions in the technology domain (including trust in technology by users, and potential (“virtual”) reduction in the geographical gap between NDHQ and the rest of the CF), organizational workflow (e.g., sign-off processes), and interpersonal relationships (e.g., according even greater importance to assumptions of trust, respect, personal accountability, and integrity).

3.1.5.2 Change, Resistance, and CF Transformation.

Perceived resistance at the mid-level of the corporate hierarchy is encapsulated in the notion of “iron majors” (or, sometimes, “iron colonels”). The notion here is that policy and other decisions are taken at the highest organizational level, yet by the time they are devolved to the mid-level, there is a resulting failure to implement, either at all, or as envisioned by the organization’s leadership. Based on the interviews, this resistance stems from two primary sources. First, a lack of understanding at the mid-level may hinder implementation. Information that is withheld, or communicated imprecisely leaves room for interpretation that can take implementation in undesirable directions, or delay implementation while clarification is sought from higher

organizational levels. A second factor leading to the observed resistance is a lack of accountability at the mid-level. Not only are individuals not consistently required to be accountable, but within the culture there has been a tendency to devolve blame to the lowest possible level as well. Without the responsibility and protection of clearly articulated accountability processes and expectations, it is not surprising that individuals who have not had a voice in the development of policy would be reluctant to implement it. An alternative view of the accountability issue suggests that if accountability resides above the individuals who actually engage with the implementation of policies, there may be a fear of making mistakes that could reflect poorly on superiors, which is counter to the nature of desired interpersonal relationships within the chain of command. Reluctance to put superiors in a position of potential embarrassment can delay timely implementation of policy.

Large-scale organizational change of the sort desired under CF Transformation carries with it many risks. One of these risks is the likelihood that various aspects of the “old” organizational culture will become more deeply entrenched (see McKee & Hill, 2006 for a full discussion of risks associated with culture change). Stovepiping, as described above, represents one area where such retrenchment can have serious organizational ramifications. Resource allocation, individual and collective effort, and successful implementation of change generally are negatively impacted when official messages (e.g., requirements for alignment, horizontal functioning, and shared solutions) are counter to the reality of how work is accomplished in the organization and to approaches that individuals find comfortable and familiar (e.g., informal alliances, “in-house” or individualized solutions, stovepipes).

CF Transformation was a topic of great interest to interview participants, as would be expected given the timing of the interviews (December 2005-March 2006). As a general statement, participants viewed the set of initiatives related to CF Transformation very positively. Specifically, participants expressed a sense of hope for the future because CF Transformation is perceived to signal an end to an era of frustration and cutbacks. Other commentary involved the positive impact that is perceived by both military and civilian participants of replacing a bureaucratic focus with an operations focus within the corporate culture¹⁴. The positive impact of this shift on solidifying a sense of performing meaningful work and contributing collectively to the effectiveness of the CF was articulated explicitly by both military and civilian participants.

CF Transformation was also, however, a source of frustration for participants. Frustration was voiced in terms of lack of inclusion in the planning process (e.g., some who expected to be included by virtue of their positions within the

¹⁴ This shift in focus refers to the issues of importance within the culture, rather than to styles of communicating or conducting business within the culture.

corporate culture were frustrated by limited opportunities to contribute meaningfully to the development of plans for CF Transformation), the exclusion of civilians in the articulation of CF Transformation directions and initiatives (i.e., CF Transformation was not initially applied to – nor seen as applicable to – civilians), and the pace of implementation (all participants indicated a sense that things were moving ahead at an unmanageable/unsustainable pace). Further, many participants expressed fear that structural changes will be the only tangible outcome from CF Transformation, and that this will result in additional “stovepipes” rather than having the desired effect of enhancing/facilitating communication and decision making.

3.1.5.3 Time

One possible consequence of the pace of postings into and out of the corporate culture is the perpetuation of risk aversion as a default stance. Research indicates that as threats occur repeatedly in the environment, responses to them by individuals gradually become less extreme and more reasoned as people become habituated to the threat and accord it a more realistic likelihood of causing harm or remaining relatively benign (e.g., Slovik & Weber, 2002). If the pace of change of personnel does not permit individuals to repeatedly experience particular, or even similar, classes of threats (e.g., changes in party affiliation of the government, funding reforms, development of new legislative frameworks), however, the likelihood of inappropriately extreme responses to threat (manifesting as a generalized aversion to risk) becoming embedded into the cultural fabric of the organization is high. Combined with the fallout from some rather public scandals involving senior military members (e.g., Somalia) and/or senior government bureaucrats (e.g., Gomery), the likelihood of an entrenched stance of risk aversion becomes even greater.

3.1.5.4 Articulation of Difference

The CF and DND combined comprise an organization that defines itself in terms of difference. Military leaders are different from civilian leaders, policy differs from implementation outcomes, actual performance differs from espoused ideals. To a great degree, individuals make sense of their world by means of defining who and what they are not, and this approach generalizes to a general tendency to view the world via dichotomies. There was a clear predisposition among interview participants to define the culture in terms of difference (usually discussed in terms of dichotomies or gaps; e.g., civilian-military dichotomy, formal-informal dichotomy, policy-implementation gap, command-consensus dichotomy, operations-bureaucracy dichotomy, CF/DND-OGD gap). The adoption of this tendency as a means of describing organizational culture is not unique to the CF/DND, but it is remarkable in its visibility in this context. The psychological parallel is found in theories of in-groups and out-groups (e.g., social identity theory; Tajfel, 1982). These

differences are perpetuated in the subcultures that also contribute to the overall organizational culture. Given that the CDS has made development of a CF identity and culture one of the guiding principles of organizational transformation, it is plausible that such an identity and culture can be created by encouraging individuals to remember that the “in-group” to which they belong (CF/DND) exists in juxtaposition to the external world (comprised of OGDs, other militaries, society, and so on). Promotion of a common (in-group) identity is likely to promote a cohesive culture and identity as desired by the organization’s leadership cadre.

3.2 Discussion

The themes derived above, when considered together, suggest a model of corporate culture that is largely defined in terms of its dynamics. The next section will describe this model.

3.2.1 Emergent Model of Corporate Culture Dynamics

The approach to data collection taken in this project was unstructured to permit the emergence of one or more idiographic model(s) of corporate culture. That is to say, the interviews were framed using four basic questions (see Annex A), and participants were free to address the problem space in ways that made sense to them as individuals, without forcing the discussion material to conform to a pre-determined model. What emerged from the data was a model of organizational culture that describes the nexus of three strong, multifaceted cultures. Figure 2 presents this model visually.

This model of corporate culture describes the dynamics and inter-relationships of the major “players” in the culture. As depicted in Figure 2, the main cultural subgroups implicated in the corporate culture are civilians, the military, and people in the external environment (particularly OGDs). The permeability of these three subcultural groups is not perceived to be equivalent, and a high degree of agreement across participants was observed in evaluating the boundary areas. Put simply, the military is perceived as a strong, impermeable culture. Civilian culture is perceived as much less resistant to incursions from outside, and there is strong desire on the part of civilian participants to enhance the degree of inter-penetration between the military and civilian subcultures. This is particularly true when confronted with the external environment, as embodied in OGDs, when the military and civilian cultures find and hold common ground by erecting barriers between themselves (i.e.,

the CF/DND as one voice) and others.

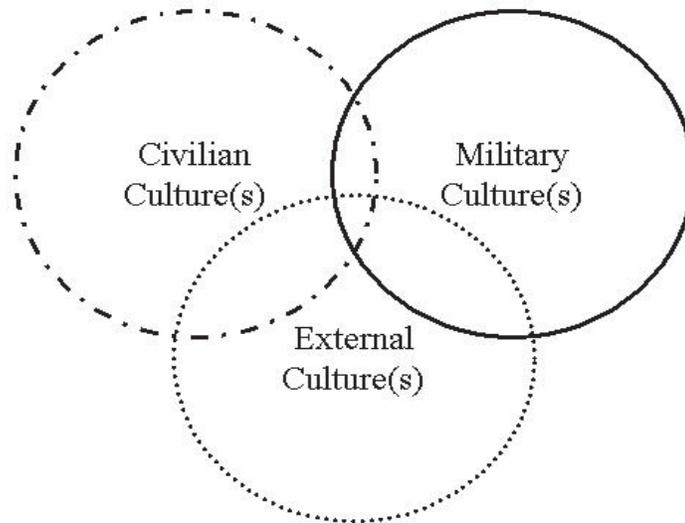


Figure 2: Emergent model of corporate culture

As noted by McKee (2004), culture can be used as a tool of inclusion, defining a cohesive organization and providing “parameters around the institution that allow people to operate effectively and comfortably within the system, socialize or regulate the absorption of new members, and maintain an identity over time” (p. 9). It can also, however, be used as a means to exclude others. This latter function resonates with many of the comments from participants that set the CF/DND apart from both Canadian society generally, and from other government departments specifically.

The characterisation of the common “front” that the CF/DND maintains when interacting with OGDs as a barrier should not be interpreted as a negative aspect of the culture. Rather, the barrier is permeable to the extent that senior decision makers in the CF/DND participate in the OGD cultural world (e.g., by sitting on interdepartmental committees, or by taking up “liaison” postings in various OGDs), and explain/share their corporate culture with others. The barrier is more related to notions of identity and “in-group” status, and permits the CF/DND to operate in an integrated fashion as the situation requires.

One important characteristic of this model is that it renders “visible” the fact that each of the main cultural groups (CF, DND, OGD) in the model possesses an unique corporate culture, complete with artifacts, values, and beliefs/assumptions, and that each of these cultures will be experienced and, therefore, shape the people within them, in different ways. Alignment of the cultures, increased permeability of the barriers between them, and respect for the necessary differences between the cultural groups will all be enhanced if senior decision makers from the three groups maintain an awareness of the cultural differences and consciously refrain from making assumptions that are not tenable outside of any one of the three groups.

Most importantly, it should be remembered that this model of inter-cultural dynamics is derived solely from the perceptions of individuals occupying specific roles within two of the three cultural groups included in the model. Much additional elaboration and validation work should be undertaken before this model is accepted as adequate.

4. Data mapped to theory

The preceding section described the findings from the interviews in some detail. Tying those findings to a theoretical framework is important because it provides a common picture for researchers to work from when dealing with issues related to corporate culture. Comparisons across contexts, for example, are substantially easier when a common theoretical framework is used to guide the effort because it provides a structure and language that makes comparison possible, even between superficially dissimilar organizations.

4.1 Levels of corporate culture

The notion of levels of culture can be approached in two ways pertinent to this discussion. First, the organizational level of participants was expected to constrain individual participants such that a qualitative difference between the input from L2 and L1 participants would manifest. This was, for the most part, not found to be the case. Certainly there were some differences in the issues raised by participants, plausibly as a function of their relative position in the organizational hierarchy. By and large, however, there was a striking similarity in the issues raised by participants at all organizational levels considered in the research.

Where differences did manifest, they were largely related to issues of communication, the impact of individual (more) senior leaders on the working climate of their subordinate leaders, and a tendency for most non-L1 participants to identify with particular subgroups more than was observed for most L1 participants. Identification with subgroups, in particular, may be attributable to the fact that many of the non-L1 participants were vocally and actively engaged with subgroup activities (e.g., working with advocacy groups, participating in environment-specific social events, sitting on various issue-specific committees), both in their professional and personal lives. Whether this is a characteristic of the individuals interviewed, of the positions they hold, or some other factor is a question for future research to address.

The second way to think about levels of culture is in line with the model of organizational culture put forward by Schein (1984). As noted previously, Schein puts forward three “levels” of culture differentiated by their content and relative visibility/concreteness. The most overt aspects of culture are captured in the overt manifestations of that culture, or cultural artifacts. Badges, symbols, language, dress, and office layout are all examples of artifacts insofar as they represent aspects of the corporate culture that are easily visible to the interested observer. The next “layer” of culture encompasses values, both those that are publicly espoused and those that are actually in use. Public values statements can be directly observed, but in-use values must often be inferred from observed behaviour. The deepest level of culture

describes the underlying beliefs and assumptions that guide organizational behaviour. This layer of culture must be inferred from observation and analysis of overt behaviour because, definitionally, it considers aspects of culture that are not typically articulated or manifested in accessible ways. Each of these levels of culture is related to the other levels, thus considering them separately from one another is done to facilitate understanding of them, rather than as a means of describing truly distinct conceptual domains. Each of the three levels will next be considered with explicit reference to the interview data.

4.2 Levels of culture I: Artifacts

Within the corporate context embodied in NDHQ, multiple artifacts of the culture are easily observable. Such artifacts include language use (acronyms, style of writing, word meanings); dress (uniforms, business attire) that sets decision makers apart from much of their staff, particularly when subordinates have the freedom to dress casually (work dress for military, casual clothes such as jeans for civilians); and “real estate” (closed offices, office size, access to meeting space in offices, proximity of administrative support (particularly those who act as “gatekeepers”)).

Within the corporate culture, these artifacts serve a variety of functions. For example, one’s position within the organizational hierarchy is visibly established through dress and office space. Parity with one’s peers is established visibly by artifactual equivalence also (e.g., size of office is relatively standard as a function of organizational level). Personal power and prestige are also made visible through formality of dress (particularly for civilians) and differences in office size and location relative to individuals’ subordinates.

With respect to dress, specifically, there is of course greater conformity among military leaders as a function of the requirement to wear uniforms. There is remarkable conformity among senior civilian decision makers to a particular degree of professional/formal dress, however. Interview participants consistently reported that greater formality of dress is observed within DND than in OGDs among (civilian) senior decision makers. One plausible explanation that participants gave was that civilians dress to emulate the formality of their uniformed military counterparts. This effort was attributed to a desire to appear and be perceived as credible and competent on the part of civilians.

One other salient artifact of the corporate culture raised obliquely during the interviews was governance structures (referring particularly to committee structures, and other groups that regularly meet about particular issue areas). Many participants reported experiencing frustration with the somewhat chaotic and overwhelmingly busy series of meetings demanding senior decision maker attendance. Particularly at the L2 level, there was a sense that missing a meeting may put one (and one’s organization) at a disadvantage, even when the utility of the meeting itself is

questionable for a particular person/organization. Some participants noted that physical presence at meetings seems to serve as a sort of proxy for active engagement in organizational functioning. The requirement for physical presence at meetings to ensure access to information is symptomatic of a stove-piped, non-transparent organization wherein information is not consistently shared outside of formal venues for information exchange (e.g., meetings).

Existing organizational structures (organizations, committees) highlight the “stovepiped” or “siloed” nature of work within the corporate culture. Large, formal hierarchies do not naturally lend themselves to horizontal, collaborative kinds of work relationships, and as a result, these opportunities must be purposefully created. Creation of such opportunities, however, was not reported as a prominent activity or aspect of the corporate culture.

4.3 Levels of culture II: Values

Values must largely be inferred from the data because they are difficult to observe directly. Some direct commentary by participants speaks to this level of cultural variables, however. Values publicly espoused within this corporate culture (e.g., collegiality, transparency, accountability, teamwork) are positive, and appear consistently in the interview summaries, as well as in other forms of formal communications (e.g., mass emails, organization websites, organizational publications). The structures and reported interpersonal dynamics within the corporate culture (e.g., stovepipes, idiosyncratic collegiality, informal means of accomplishing organizational goals), however, are suggestive of some “in-use”, or enacted, values that are neither as positive, nor as aligned with the organizational and governmental vision for the future as might be desired: Openness, transparency and accountability are not consistently observed values-in-use within the corporate culture.

Another likely disconnect between espoused and in-use values is suggested by the findings with respect to trust and mutual respect for competence. Great efforts appear to be made within the organization to ensure that there are sufficient checks and balances in the system to ensure that individuals’ personal impact upon the system as a whole is mitigated to a large degree. The most obvious manifestation of this is in the rigid adherence to the chain of command for accomplishing all organizational tasks. The degree to which mistrust is evident within the corporate culture (e.g., as demonstrated by inconsistent communication, reluctance to delegate consistently, failure to question the organization, particularly when questions must be pushed back up through the chain of command, and by the deeply entrenched stance of passing information on a predominantly “need-to-know” rather than a “need-to-share” basis) further substantiates the conclusion that there is a gap between which values are espoused and which are enacted within the corporate culture.

Large gaps between espoused and enacted values are problematic for multiple reasons. Such gaps breed cynicism among organizational members, undermine trust

relationships and organizational credibility, detract from perceived integrity of organizational leaders, and may decrease loyalty to the organization for some individuals. Clearly gaps at the level of values must be avoided to maintain a healthy organizational culture. As noted previously, within the corporate culture of the CF/DND, there is an expectation that senior decision makers will be ultimately responsible for the creation and maintenance of a positive organizational culture. The degree to which individual leaders demonstrate through their words and actions adherence to publicly espoused values is one powerful method of accomplishing this. It is of the utmost importance that senior decision makers remain aware of their visibility to lower levels of the organizational hierarchy, and that they “walk the talk” in terms of organizational values. As in virtually every other context in which humans interact, interview participants were much more willing to discuss the shortcomings of other senior decision makers than they were willing to reflect on their own behaviour, however.

4.4 Levels of culture III: Beliefs and assumptions

As with values, basic assumptions must also be inferred from the data because they are rarely directly observable, and may not even be salient factors as individual actors carry out their daily business. In other words, basic assumptions may be clearer to an observer than they are to the person acting upon them, simply by virtue of the objective distance that an observer can bring to bear upon the examination of the person/context/culture. The deeply entrenched nature of beliefs and assumptions also makes them very difficult to shift.

Beliefs shape and guide choices made by individuals. For example, participants’ responses to the interview questions suggested a widely held belief that change will impact negatively on individual and (sub)organizational power and prestige. This belief may underlie some of the resistance to change at the mid-levels of the organization. Similarly, the belief that subordinates are well-prepared (consistently expressed with respect to military subordinates of both military and civilian leaders) or not so well-prepared to perform competently (sometimes expressed with respect to civilians, relatively more often by military leaders) guides individual actions with respect to delegation of work and authority, expectations of subordinates’ performance, content of professional development curricula, and so on.

Assumptions, similarly to values, guide overt organizational choices and changes. The assumption that information will be mishandled or maliciously misinterpreted, for example, is a plausible (likely partial) explanation for the reluctance of many senior decision makers to share information openly. Assumptions are particularly pernicious because they are unspoken and taken for granted by most individuals within a particular cultural context, and are rarely questioned as a result. Negative or incorrect assumptions, therefore, can wreak havoc upon an organization, and can derail organizational change efforts that do not take assumptions into consideration.

Some other assumptions that can be derived from participants' comments include: Common experience is the most effective means of transmitting cultural information; bureaucracies are resistant to change; operational experience is required to make strategic institutional decisions; and any change must be experienced identically by all organizational members, regardless of location or other individual differences. The validity and/or truth of these assumptions may be (should be) debated. Nonetheless, the perceptions and understanding of individuals working within the corporate culture are guided by assumptions about the organizational environment and people therein, making assumptions powerful drivers of organizational behaviour.

5. Conclusion

Culture is grounded in human behaviour. It should come as no surprise, then, that corporate culture manifests in ways that are complex, inter-related, and occasionally contradictory. Although every effort was made to maintain the focus of this research on the corporate culture of the CF/DND, glimpses of the impact military and public service culture have had on this blended context were observed.

On the whole, the corporate culture of the CF/DND is experienced as a positive one, despite particular frustrations and challenges. The growth and change inherent in CF Transformation will have greater chances of success because of the positive cultural supports in place, providing that retrenchment of positions (i.e., solidification of stovepipes) does not occur. Senior decision makers within the CF/DND are the best resources available to ensure that communication, collaboration and cooperation across (sub)organizational boundaries become the norm, rather than perpetuating competition and “turf” protection as default postures within the corporate culture.

The essential strengths of the corporate culture of the CF/DND are important and emerged clearly from the data. The nexus of the military and civilian cultures provides a context where assumptions can be articulated and debated, and the positive aspects of both military culture (e.g., preference for action over prolonged preparation, formality of structures and roles within the chain of command, willingness to speak frankly and honestly, salience of the operational mandate) and civilian culture (e.g., support/service orientation, understanding of broader governmental context, attention to detail, diversity) can be brought to bear on organizational problems to maximum effect.

Common frustrations cross military-civilian boundaries, and include stovepipes, inconsistent communication and guidance from more senior levels, and difficulty eliciting desired respect for the skills, competencies, and commitment that individuals bring to their positions within the corporate culture.

There are clear implications for the impact that the existing corporate culture has on the effectiveness of the CF/DND in carrying out its mandate. Extending the analysis published by Graham (2002), the military-civilian gap described by interview participants in this study has consequences on two levels. At the level of formalized relationships (i.e., relationships between the CF/DND and other organizations, agencies, and so on), misalignment of civilian and military efforts within the CF/DND could result in a lack of consistency when the CF/DND interacts with external bodies. The internal perception, described in the analysis above, is one of a common “front” presented to external parties. Further research will be required to evaluate whether or not this perception is accurate. Lacking a complete understanding of the cultures of external organizational entities does not facilitate understanding how the CF/DND

interacts with others, suggesting that research in other organizations should also be initiated and compared with the findings presented here. The second level of concern relates to the individualized relationships within the CF/DND that contribute to the alignment of effort that is imperative for organizational effectiveness *vis à vis* others. Individual decision makers in the corporate culture who are mindful of their cultural background and related assumptions will be most able to establish and maintain meaningful professional relationships that are not hindered by miscommunication due to cultural differences.

Leadership, and the senior leadership cadre, was seen as having a direct impact upon culture – within the CF/DND, individual leaders are held accountable for the organizational culture, at least by their peers and subordinates. Organizational endorsement for such expectations is also evident in publications such as *Duty with Honour* (also known as the Profession of Arms manual; DND, 2003), and *Leadership in the Canadian Forces - Doctrine* (DND, 2005). Clarity surrounding the specific activities and attitudes that are desired from organizational leaders, however, did not emerge consistently from the interview data. Higgs and Rowland (2005) identified three primary roles for leaders in leading change (a primary function for leaders within the CF/DND corporate culture). Least important was the leader's role as a primary shaper of behaviour. Reliance upon leaders' direct interventions to shape subordinate behaviour creates dependence upon the leader that not only fails to contribute to successful change outcomes, but also has been observed to create barriers to success. Two other roles – communicating the need for change and creating the capacity for change within organizations by developing subordinates appropriately and entrenching appropriate organizational structures – were critical to the successful implementation of a variety of change initiatives, however. In the case of senior decision makers in the CF/DND corporate culture, willingness to devolve accountability and responsibility to appropriate levels, to communicate honestly and openly about issues and initiatives, and to create conditions of trust within the whole organization will be the keys to successful management of organizational change generally, and of cultural change specifically.

The future of the corporate culture may be substantially impacted by changes in the demographic and values makeup of Canadian society. Specifically, the concern voiced by some participants regarding the shifting social landscape nationally suggests the possibility of large internal cultural change for the CF (and likely for the DND) in the future. The impact of social change will be mitigated to the extent that socialization processes succeed at appropriately instilling the military ethos (for the CF) and a service orientation (for the DND) in new recruits as part of their career development.

The interview data provided for this project by senior decision makers revealed the wealth of talent, commitment, and devotion of the individuals who hold positions of decision-making power and authority in the CF/DND corporate culture. The final

section of this report will present recommendations for enhancing the positive aspects of the corporate culture, and improving those areas that remain challenging.

6. Recommendations

Results from the analysis of the interviews highlight a number of positive aspects of the corporate culture. These, of course, should be preserved and further strengthened as possible. In particular, the collegial, positive interactions reported among senior decision makers should be supported and encouraged.

6.1 Rewarding desired behaviour

Over and above the generally positive descriptions of the corporate culture, some participants reported positive, collaborative working environments that appear to be qualitatively different from environments elsewhere in the CF/DND by virtue of the degree to which individuals are valued, respected, and given opportunities to fully participate in organizational activities. One of the most notable features of these highly positive environments was the fact that all personnel (military and civilian) working in them had common qualifications that were understood and appreciated by all those who work together. External accreditation (e.g., degree requirements, certification requirements) was the main vehicle for achieving the commonality of qualifications and understanding. Whenever possible, senior decision makers (and all leaders/managers within the organization) would enhance the organizational culture by promoting awareness and respect for the shared markers of achievement attained by their subordinates.

Other means of rewarding desired behaviour include incorporating new competencies or activities on annual evaluations (e.g., rewarding efforts to communicate clearly, to undertake initiatives explicitly geared to develop subordinate autonomy, or to demonstrate moral courage by challenging the chain of command appropriately); rewarding individuals who demonstrate lateral thinking and excellent communication skills publicly; revisiting policy requirements and processes to ensure that the expectations of policy developers are in line with ground reality, that persons responsible for implementation understand the intent of policy, and that accountability for implementation resides at the appropriate organizational level; and ensuring that individuals in all parts of the organization receive consistent, clear communication regarding organizational priorities and direction (so that they can tailor their individual efforts in ways that will promote the overall organizational intent).

6.2 Flow of information

Areas that are more problematic need different kinds of treatment. The culture of secrecy exemplified in the hoarding of information, the mis-classification of documents (e.g., as secret or higher when their content does not demand such restrictive classification), and the hesitation to share information freely among

personnel should be broken. Accountability and transparency requirements from the federal government, efficient performance within the organization, and the ability of individuals to respond in a timely fashion to operational requirements demand that information flow with much more freedom within the corporate culture. This may require training of personnel at all organizational levels specific to determining what information really is sensitive and why (including guidance on how to make this distinction clear to subordinates), and the establishment of commonly understood and accepted boundaries around the internal and external uses of information. In effect, the culture must shift from valuing secrecy and rewarding the perpetuation of information silos to a culture that values open communication and rewards individual and collective efforts to work horizontally. Moving from a “need to know” to a “need to share” mentality must be embedded in the behaviour, training, and communicated expectations of all personnel, both military and civilian, and must be modelled by senior decision makers throughout the CF/DND.

6.3 Preparation for the corporate culture

As outlined in other work (McKee & Hill, 2006), culture change is both an inevitable by-product of large-scale organizational change and a requirement for the successful transformation of the CF that is required to keep the CF effective in the face of a substantially changed (and ever-changing) threat environment. Senior decision makers have a critical role to play in developing and maintaining organizational culture(s). In order to ensure that individuals are prepared to take on this role, preparation for senior decision making roles should include competency development in the areas of leadership, organizational culture, and managing change. Furthermore, evaluation of senior leaders could incorporate indicators of activity in these areas to ensure that they receive ongoing attention from these individuals.

In a related vein, preparation for the corporate culture should explicitly involve appropriate efforts to develop an identity consistent with the integrated focus and work within the corporate culture. For a variety of reasons, issues of identity within the strategic “layer” of the organization merit additional scrutiny. Identity is one possible mechanism contributing to the perpetuation of stovepipes within the corporate culture. Understanding the specific ways in which environmental and other identities impact upon multiple performance outcomes (e.g., decision making and leadership styles, rigidity of adherence to formal structures for accomplishing tasks) should also suggest mechanisms for mitigating such impacts and developing an identity within individuals likely to take up senior decision making roles that will be less likely to perpetuate problematic aspects of the corporate culture (e.g., stovepipes). As suggested previously, a simplistic first step towards developing such an “integrated” identity might involve consistent and overt emphasis on the similarities between individuals within the culture (e.g., competencies, mandates) while simultaneously downplaying (or at least not rewarding) differences that are inimical to an integrated working environment.

6.4 Stovepiped solutions

Countering the observed preference for maintaining well-delineated, individual organizations will be critical to achieving the intent of CF Transformation. In order to overcome this mindset, however, there must be consistent messages sent to all senior decision makers that such approaches are counter to the desired organizational culture and business outcomes. Behaviour that is not rewarded will ultimately be extinguished, as basic learning theory has demonstrated (e.g., Skinner, 1953). Lack of rewards for maintaining stovepipes, combined with incentives and rewards for demonstrating horizontal, shared approaches and solutions will be the most effective way of changing this aspect of the corporate culture.

Moving away from “stovepiped” solutions will also facilitate achieving one of the greatest challenges to the CF/DND at present: Establishing a set of collectively acceptable capabilities for the Canadian military. Achieving consensus about the desired capabilities will require collective input and agreement about procurement, personnel, and overall budgets, will be achieved only through open and honest communication, and will require some difficult decisions regarding what to stop doing. The collective will appears to be in place within the senior decision making cadre of the CF/DND, but cultural barriers as manifest in stovepiped thinking will make achieving the desired outcome more difficult.

6.5 Governance

Most participants in this study clearly articulated the urgent requirement for clearly delineated authority and responsibility structures within the corporate culture. Also commonly expressed was the belief that authorities and responsibilities need to be better distributed throughout the organization, rather than resting solely with the senior decision making cadre. The frustration, complicated communications, and misperceptions that can arise when accountability and responsibility are less than clear or are not assigned to appropriate levels within the organizational hierarchy does not facilitate the work of the CF/DND, does not support the mandate of the organization, does not contribute to the well-being of troops on the front lines, and undermines loyalty and commitment to the organization.

Additionally, participation in governance of the CF/DND was raised as a greater challenge than it should be, at least in the estimation of some senior decision makers. Participants tended to focus on meeting attendance as the most concrete manifestation of the problem. Articulation of the purpose and realistically expected outcomes of meetings would facilitate choices on the part of senior decision makers in terms of their attendance. Clear messages about who should attend meetings and for what purpose, embedding the value of engagement (vs. presence) into the culture, and substantially more open communication will be required before a shift towards more effective governance will be accomplished. Senior decision makers, as well as

individuals throughout the organization (particularly within the corporate culture) must learn to trust and to communicate in more consistent and complete fashion as a general rule if organizational effectiveness is to be enhanced.

6.6 Additional work

One final recommendation is that the findings reported here need to be substantiated by additional empirical work. Annex C presents a list of specific questions and research directions compiled from this report. The exploratory nature of this study is reflected in the volume of additional questions generated by these results. The interpretations of findings offered here are grounded in the reality of the interview participants, and represent logical and theoretically grounded inferences that should ideally be confirmed prior to embarking upon policy, procedural, structural or cultural organizational change.

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Annexes

Annex A: Email invitation and interview outline sent to potential participants in the Senior Decision Makers Project.

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of an ongoing initiative geared to explore the corporate culture of the CF/DND, you are cordially invited to participate in an interview study of senior Departmental decision makers. The goal of the study is to explore the perceptions of individuals engaged in various ways with the shaping of CF/DND culture, and to identify strategies for shaping CF/DND culture into the future.

Your participation as a senior leader in the CF/DND is particularly critical to the success of this initiative because you are one of a select group of leaders positioned to have a strong impact on the corporate culture of the CF/DND. Your perceptions are therefore of highest importance in this investigation.

Who will be participating?

All L1s, a sampling of L2s, and several other key individuals are being approached to participate in this study. It is hoped that all will be willing and able to contribute to our understanding of the corporate culture of the CF/DND, now and into the future.

What will be involved?

Recognizing the demands placed upon senior leaders in the CF/DND, we will keep interviews to a maximum of one hour. The questions we will pose will be broad in scope, and there are no “correct” answers to any of them. Specifically, we will be interested in several general lines of inquiry as suggested by the following questions:

- What is the current corporate culture of the CF like?
- What are the strengths/weaknesses of the current culture?
- What needs to change?
- What would facilitate/hinder change?
- What should the future corporate culture of the CF be like?

Notes will be taken during the interviews, and a summary of the interview material provided by each participant will be prepared for their review. This process will ensure that the material accurately captures the views of participants. The interview summaries will constitute the material for subsequent analysis. A final report will be prepared within 6 months of the conclusion of the interviews, and will be made available to all participants as a follow-up activity.

When will this happen?

Interviews will be scheduled between November, 2005 and February, 2006. Should you indicate your willingness to participate in this initiative (by responding to this email), we will contact you with several date options, and will be pleased to accommodate you if you would provide some preferred times/dates that suit your schedule. A one-hour time-slot is requested.

I have more questions, who should I contact?

Please feel free to contact the lead investigator (Dr. Sarah Hill) with any additional inquiries or clarifications. Contact details are as follows:

Dr. Sarah Hill
Defence Scientist
Directorate of Strategic Human Resources
NDHQ
Tel: 992-8689
Email: Hill.SA@forces.gc.ca

Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Best regards,

The Corporate Culture Project Team

Dr. Sarah Hill
Ms. Leesa Tanner
Ms. Katherine Banko
Ms. Tracey Wait
Ms. Karen Daley
Maj Johanna Ewins
Ms. Tracey Aker

Annex B: REB Approval for the Senior Decision Makers Project

1150-23-110/R34

15 April 05

Distribution list (pg 2)

D STRAT HR/ORD RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD REVIEW

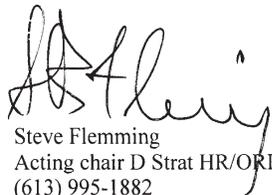
Protocol Number: 003
Title: CF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE PROJECT
Investigator(s): Dr. Sarah Hill
Brian Mc Kee
John Verdon
Section: D Strat HR

Ethical Review

Committee Members: Irene Collin DASOR 2
Steve Flemming DQOL 9
Maj. Rob Morrow D Strat HR 5-4
Stephen Okazawa D Strat HR 4-7
Tracey Wait D Strat HR 2-2

Review and Discussion:

1. The REB conducted a review of the protocol and supporting documentation as submitted on 01 April 05.
2. The revised protocol is APPROVED effective 15 April 05.
3. The investigator(s) are reminded that any changes in the approved protocol or any untoward incidents or injuries arising as a result of a subject's participation in the study are to be brought to the attention of the Committee Chairman as soon as they occur either verbally or in writing.



Steve Flemming
Acting chair D Strat HR/ORD REB
(613) 995-1882

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Annex C: List of research questions and directions

Throughout this report, research questions and directions have been raised as part of the presentation of results. These are summarized below for ease of access. There is no particular importance ranking implicit in the order in which the bullets are presented.

- How do civilians adjust their leadership/management style in order to facilitate integration with military culture? What mechanisms are most important to this shift? Comparative descriptions of (civilian) leadership in other contexts (primarily in OGDs) would facilitate understanding in this area.
- What mechanisms are most effective for enhancing credibility and reducing inter-group barriers to mutual appreciation of competency? Psychological research into the factors that shape impressions and beliefs about others in the work environment may suggest tools or contexts that are most supportive for establishing conditions of mutual respect and support in groups comprised of individuals with diverse experience and backgrounds.
- A summary evaluation of barriers to integration would provide valuable information to organizational leaders about culturally-relevant (e.g., failure to communicate fully and effectively, stovepiped (traditional) solutions, informal communications and arrangements that can exclude some parties from decision-making) and other impediments (e.g., structural and/or policy constraints) to achieving the integrated vision of CF Transformation.
- How do military and civilian organizational members view strategic decision-making roles within the organization? Do both groups aspire to these positions, and for what reasons? The interview data here suggested that civilians view such positions as “power” positions, valuable because of their seniority and prestige in the broad government context. The size and visibility of DND makes such positions within this department potentially more desirable than analogous positions in other departments, despite the small number of senior civilian positions (a limit on career paths in some instances). Military members, on the other hand, seem more inclined to view senior decision making positions as “buffer” positions, providing senior military members with opportunities to protect and support military personnel in operations. These observations need to be examined more closely to evaluate their accuracy, and to assess the relationship and impact of such considerations given the military tendency to promote individuals to senior decision making positions based on operational experience rather than on development as effective senior executives.

- The impact of subcultures on the performance of senior decision makers within the corporate culture merits detailed consideration. The requirement for a better understanding of subcultures within the CF has been identified for some time (e.g., McKee, 2004b). Such an investigation should be geared to understanding which aspects of the corporate context (including culture) are most susceptible to subcultural differences. Within the corporate culture, the current study findings suggest that senior decision makers from different environments and backgrounds have stylistic and procedural preferences formed in other contexts, for example. One area where such differences can introduce unnecessary barriers to seamless transitions (between individuals leaving and coming into specific positions, particularly in terms of subordinate performance during such transitions) and agile organizational performance is strongly related to the frequency of postings into and out of senior decision making positions. Mitigating the impact of subcultures is also a possible mechanism for supporting the development of a more integrated identity among senior decision makers.
- One of the principles guiding CF Transformation refers to a shift in identity to a more integrated (pan-CF) identity for military members. The integrated nature of the corporate context suggests that this will (or should) have implications for civilian personnel also. How can a pan-CF/DND identity be formed in those taking up senior decision making roles? Which aspects of environmental identities should be suppressed, and which contribute in valuable ways? Specific mechanisms of identity formation, and the required strength of identity to ensure maintenance of strategic focus are unknown. To what degree should military and civilian decision makers in the corporate context share a common identity?
- Analysis of workflow patterns and communication channels would highlight bottlenecks and clarify those that are systemic (i.e., a function of organizational structures and necessary processes) and those that are attributable to individuals. Where systemic issues are identified, corrective measures may be considered.
- Re-examination of the issues raised in the current study within 3-5 years (and, ideally, again in 8-10 years) will be required to adequately assess the impact of CF Transformation on the corporate culture in the CF/DND. In general, longitudinal tracking of the impact of organizational change and of other kinds of policy implementation is a “best practice” that the organization would benefit from adopting.
- The impact of deep involvement with subcultures emerged from the interviews as an area worthy of further investigation. The tendency to observe more of such involvement lower in the organizational hierarchy was suggested by the

findings, and merits focused scrutiny. Tracking such involvement over the course of a career, for example, may suggest optimal preparatory activities leading to enhanced performance by L1 decision makers, or may suggest trends related to gradual changes in the corporate culture that could be purposefully managed if identified early. The impact of historical deep involvement with multiple subcultures on individual outcomes (e.g., individual achievement, job satisfaction) has not been examined in the CF/DND to date.

- The interaction and relationship of the CF/DND with the broader government is perceived in particular ways internally. Specifically, participants reported a perception that the CF/DND presents a “unified front” in these interactions. Unknown at this point, however, is the accuracy of these perceptions. Research examining the cultures of OGDs also will be a necessary step towards accurately understanding the cultural interactions between them and the CF/DND. One possible framework to apply to this work is suggested by the model of military professionalism put forward in the Profession of Arms Manual (*Duty with Honour*: DND, 2003). The notions of responsibility, expertise and identity will have analogues in every government department, and a public service orientation may represent an analogue to the military ethos. Application of such a framework will facilitate cross-organization comparison, and should suggest avenues for enhancing the interactions of the CF/DND with their OGD partners.
- The degree to which leadership is successful at setting up conditions for success will be instrumental to the ultimate success of organizational change (e.g., CF Transformation). Evaluation of the outcomes from change processes should incorporate explicit evaluations of the performance of senior decision makers in the CF/DND in this domain.

List of symbols/abbreviations/acronyms/initialisms

DND	Department of National Defence
CF	Canadian Forces
L1	Level 1 Senior Decision Maker (ADM level)
L2	Level 2 Senior Decision Maker (DG level)
DM	Deputy Minister (unless otherwise specified, of National Defence)
NCM	Non-commissioned member
OGD	Other Government Department (i.e., not DND)

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This exploratory study of the corporate culture of the Canadian Forces (CF) and Department of National Defence (DND) was undertaken to address an identified understanding gap. Understanding corporate culture is of particular importance when large-scale, fundamental reforms are introduced within an organizational context, as in the case of CF Transformation, because culture can either facilitate or hinder such change efforts. Interviews with 45 senior decision makers spanning the top "layers" of the organizational hierarchy of the CF/DND were analyzed, and a description of the corporate culture and its internal dynamics emerged with some clarity. Data from the interviews were also compared against an existing model of corporate culture drawn from the scholarly literature, with illuminating results. Recommendations for maintaining areas of strength, for improvement in problematic domains, and for additional research are made.

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- Corporate Culture
- Senior Decision Makers
- Qualitative Analysis
- CF Transformation



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