Effects of Rapid Culture Modernization in the Royal Regiment of Canadian Artillery and

the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) as a Whole

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Introduction

This article examines the core components of organizational culture and climate in order to facilitate culture modernization within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). Since Operation HONOUR's conception in 2015, the sexual misconduct crisis and notions of a 'toxic' and 'hostile' work environment have forced the CAF to set a goal of modernizing its culture. This had led to the implementation and rapid changes to several orders and policies-even a change to the dress regulations-to encompass individualism and be more in keeping with societal norms. Militarily, however, rapid culture modernization within the CAF faces several challenges and poses some serious questions about how it can change the behaviours of long-serving members as well as encompass the behavioral norms and identities of a newer generation of both non-commissioned members and officers joining the CAF. Further, the CAF cannot simply change its culture without changing its climate, two alternative constructs which are often used interchangably without the user fully understanding the difference. To handle the rapid implementation of policies and regulations, and to ensure it does not have a severe negative long-term impact, one must look at academic and organizational collaboration to ensure organizational culture, organizational climate, and change theory research are not overlooked throughout the process. If so, change may become too rapid in that shared expecations and perceptions of the working environment may be negatively impacted for several years, if not decades, further worsening CAF organizational culture and climate.

Organizational Culture

Before looking at the differences between organizational culture and climate, we need to briefly understand what they are. There are great debates regarding organizational culture. Watkins (2013) argues that while there is agreement that organizational culture exists and that it plays a crucial role in shaping behaviours in organizations, there is little consensus on what culture really is. This is a problem because without a reasonable definition of culture, we cannot hope to understand its connections to other key elements of the organization. Sun (2008) also states that, historically, there are a number of definitions regarding organizational culture within the literature. However, culture is manifested in the typical characteristics of an organization and it is becoming widely accepted that organizational culture is defined as the deeply rooted values and beliefs that are shared by members of an organization. Simply put, organizational culture is the institution's identity, the values, and norms that have organically grown over time.

Organizational Climate

As organizational culture is the norms and values that have grown over time, organizational climate is about the perceptions and feelings that each member has towards certain aspects of a particular organization including rules, leadership, and policies. Longo (2014) argues that organizational climate is subject to change much more frequently than organizational culture as climate is influenced by the top management within an organization. Tahir (2020) states that climate is a barometer for judging the employee sentiment about their employers' policies and practices. Berberoglu (2018) additionally argues that organizational climate is the employee behaviour in organizations formed from both their personal characteristics and the environment in which they perform. Simply put, organizational climate is the individual perceptions, recurring patterns of behaviour, attitudes, and feelings of employees within a specific organization (Berberoglu, 2018).

Organizational Culture vs Organizational Climate

Ehrhart (2016) states that even though both organizational culture and organizational climate address the psychosocial organizational environment, the two constructs have existed on parallel tracks for the past few decades and, although they have many similarities, there are some critical differences. Organizational culture, for instance, is the broader construct that encompasses the employees' experiences at work. Organizational climate, however, is more narrowly defined in terms of the employees' shared perceptions of the organization's policies,

practices, and procedures. In addition, culture represents the true image of an organization, whereas climate represents individual perceptions, although there may be differences between each of their ideas. Furthermore, the deeper layers of culture lay outside of the day-to-day awareness of the employees, whereas climate is based on the employees' perceptions of what is happening around them at work (Ehrhart, 2016). Organizational culture is defined simply as 'how things are done around here' whereas organizational climate is defined simply as 'how it feels to work around here' (Berberoglu, 2018).

CAF Culture

Since Confederation, the CAF and the Canadian military profession have tried to stay in step with the Canadian people and society and its culture whilst remaining subordinate to the elected civil authority (Eyre, 2022). As members of the CAF, both as an individual and a collective organizational group, there is a duty to uphold the highest standards of conduct while both on and off duty by displaying the best example of the ethos, values, and culture the CAF is trying to convey (Eyre, 2022). As defined in *'Trusted to Serve 2022'* the CAF ethos describes who the CAF are as a profession and the "characteristic spirit of culture, community or organization as manifested in its beliefs and aspirations." As CAF culture has organically grown over a long period of time, the core values, Duty, Loyalty, Integrity and Courage, outlined in *'Trusted to Serve'* are representative of the culture the Forces have been, and always will be, trying to achieve. The addition of two core values, Inclusiveness and Accountably, have inherently addressed the presence of gender-based violence, sexual misconduct, discrimination, and crisis of identity. However, these elements should not only be described and taught but MUST be embodied by all members of the military, Profession of Arms, and CAF, at all times (Eyre, 2022).

CAF Climate

Climate is a construct referring the employee experience with an organization's policies, practices and measures (Tahir, 2020). Research and study of climate within the CAF originated in the 80's, identifying the human factors, dimensions, and behaviours of combat readiness, aptitude, combat proficiency, motivation, and leadership (Davis, 2006). In addition, the focus of CAF climate has been on determining the relationships between employee experience and perceptions of leadership and unit operational effectiveness. Furthermore, top management and military leadership of the Forces can have significant impacts on climate within the CAF; even

the smallest of change to working conditions can significantly affect climate factors and employee perceptions of morale, cohesion, and commitment (Davis, 2006). CAF climate is incredibly temperamental and has potential for daily, weekly, and monthly oscillations (Davis, 2006). Identifying the measurements of climate gives the CAF the tools to understand perceptions of the integrated and long-lasting characteristics of culture within the Forces. Thus, utilizing quantitative climate research has the potential to identify the changes in CAF culture that can be more easily measured over time, across multiple units, and can assist with leadership development, training, and effective decision making (Davis, 2006).

Misconduct, Discrimination and Changes in the CAF

In an article published by Cotter (2019), sexual misconduct is broadly described as a wide-ranging spectrum of negative behaviours ranging from inappropriate to unwanted jokes to unwarranted touching and sexual assault, a major issue that is faced universally. Impacting and targeting women more often than men, these behaviours have been the focus of global campaigns, such as the 'me too' movement in recent years. In the first Survey of Sexual Misconduct in the CAF (SSMCAF), conducted in 2016, 80% of Regular Force serving members either witnessed or experienced sexual or discriminatory behaviour (Cotter, 2019). In addition, 1.7% of those were victims of sexual assault that had been committed within a military setting or by another member of the Forces. Cotter (2019) summarizes that between the first SSMCAF conducted in 2016 and the second conducted in 2018, there was little to no change in the cases of sexual assault among women, in the characteristics of the perpetrator of sexual misconduct, and that most victims did not report or consult services following their sexual assault. In addition, sexual touching remained the most common form of sexual misconduct/assault. Although stories of cases of sexual misconduct have been the face of the media within the last few years, sexual misconduct is a symptom of a much larger issue: a toxic environment within both military and civilian workplaces. Unless these issues are addressed immediately, the impacts of toxicity will linger for years, if not decades, thereby affecting the CAF's reputation to the point of impacting retention and repulsing enlistment into the Forces (Connolly, 2022).

As well as sexual misconduct, acts of discrimination and widespread systemic racism also plague the CAF. Connolly (2022) argues that systemic racism is rampant throughout the CAF, harming new recruits and putting at risk the country's national security if jobs continue to go unfilled. Furthermore, the report outlines multiple recommendations across various areas of

culture and systems, which includes barriers faced by black, indigenous, women, and LGBTQ2+ members within the ranks (Connolly, 2022). Some of those changes have already begun. Rehman (2022) states that after just over 400 hours of consultations with approximately 9000 participants, it was determined that four elements of existing culture within the CAF need particular attention: service to the mission, warrior identity, leadership, and teamwork. Furthermore, Rehman (2022) shows that change such as changes to the dress code and updates to gender neutrality are already taking effect in efforts to be more inclusive and promote a more diverse environment. In addition, strategies to reach, recruit and retain women, members of the Black, LGBTQ2+, and Indigenous communities have also been implemented, including the Building Our Future Program, created in partnership with the Sexual Misconduct Center. Finally, Rehman (2022) states that it has become clear that creating a culture that is rooted in diversity, equality and inclusion must be central to the approach.

Change Models

With ever evolving cultures and societal norms, organizational change is a normal part of every organization, however conducting long lasting positive change is never easy. The ability to complete the changes needed regarding how an organization functions plays a direct role in the long-term success of an organization. Change management models lay out distinct guidelines that assist organizations in the planning and implementation of more successful change (Hicks, 2022). Thus, the CAF needs to look at change models in order to implement change in an effective manner. There are 8 core change management models that are often chosen by organizations to implement effective change (Hicks, 2022). One of them, Kurt Lewin's change management model, is a simple yet effective model that humanizes the change management process conducted in three stages: unfreeze, change, and refreeze, thus taking an organization from its current state to its desired state (Hussain et al., 2018). The unfreezing stage is the stage to prepare and understand the need for change, analysing the negative aspects of how things are done to accurately understand what needs to change. In the unfreezing stage, a case is made to members of the organization and the need for change is communicated so everyone impacted is prepared. The change stage is where changes are implemented whereby changes are put into practice with communication and support for impacted employees is continued. The refreezing stage is the final stage and, to avoid falling back into old ways of doing things, strategies are developed to check in and ensure the change stays (Hicks, 2022).

Effects of Rapid Change in the CAF

With the CAF still analysing needed changes and communicating changes that have been determined, using Kurt Lewin's change management model would reduce the risk of failing to conduct positive change by utilizing an unfreeze period and preparing members for the change, thus no further changes should yet be made. As mentioned, however, changes to policy and regulations have rapidly taken place, specifically the dress regulations, which has caused controversy and outrage with some members at the highest level of the CAF, both retired and serving. Lt-Gen (Ret'd) Michel Maisonneuve expressed that the military used to be one of the highest regarded professions in the world, however, is now ill funded, lacks personnel and is a force where uniforms have become a way of self-expression rather than a tool of prideful collectivism. In response, John Robson (2022) states that if "enlist RuPaul's drag race but not God-fearing patriots, we will continue to drive away the latter but won't attract the former." However, there are serious efforts to change this and, although the response to updates in policy and regulations show why it is imperative to communicate the need for positive change, they also show the negative impacts of rapidly implementing change with no valid change model in place. To further emphasize the effects of rapid culture modernization, Burke & Brewster (2021) state that by early February 2021, 13 senior Canadian military officers had been ousted, scrutinized and forced into retirement from some of the most powerful posts in the CAF: Admiral Art McDonald, Major General Peter Dawe, and General Jonathan Vance, the latter who ordered the creation and implementation of Operation HONOUR whilst serving as the Chief of Defense Staff. While changes were made, these ousting's have negatively affected members trust, confidence, and faith in the top leadership within the CAF.

Organizational socialization is defined as the process through which the newcomers or newly hired staff to an organization are transformed from "Outsiders" to "Insiders" (Feldman, 1976). The CAF is lacking focus on socialization of new recruits entering the CAF at all levels, and although the CAF teaches newly enlisted members the ethos, traditions, and doctrine it wants to instil, there is a lack of focus on mentor behaviours in comparison to the desired behaviours that recruits observe throughout their initial training. In many ways, socialization is a learning process, and through indirect observation and direct instruction of desired behaviours, new recruits learn about important group norms within an organization. Although the main goal of socialization and training is to improve job knowledge and skill, the context of the training

provides a myriad of signals to new employees regarding the culture and climate of an organization (Reichers, 1987). Thus, without an adequate plan, understanding the need for change, and lack of perceptions of current and desired behaviours-unearthed through change management and concurrent quantitative climate research-the CAF will struggle to implement long term positive change through the use of socialization. Thus, implemented changes may not significantly impact recruits, old cultural norms, and perceptions of the working environment would still be socialized, leading to no positive change or any significant change at all.

Conclusion

The CAF needs to implement a change management model to create a viable long-term plan to mitigate any further rapid changes that may negatively impact members' perceptions of the working environment, instead of delaying evaluation frameworks for culture change as outlined in the CAF's conduct and culture change progress tracker (Canada, 2023). Furthermore, the CAF needs to refrain from making any further changes without a viable change management model in place. This is because organizational culture cannot be changed overnight, and the CAF cannot simply change its culture without changing its climate. In addition, asking the CAF to change its culture means asking it to reshape its service members' attitudes and behaviours to create a new set of values and beliefs, which is a highly complex task to achieve (Duval-Lantoine, 2021). As significant issues with culture have been identified including misconduct, discrimination, and systemic racism, it shows that the organization is currently in the unfreezing stage of the Kurt Lewin's change management model, a model I would suggest the CAF to implement, proving the CAF recognizes the current negative behaviours plaguing the institution. However, as there are currently limited ways in the organization to measure desired behaviour that the CAF wants to achieve long-term; implementing rapid changes to policy, such as the dress regulations, could negatively impact members' perceptions of certain aspects of the organization. This includes the leaderships' ability to implement positive change to organizational culture and climate. Further, without fully understanding organizational culture, climate, and the effects of rapid change, these negative impacts may not be fully understood until it is too late, further worsening recruitment, retention and the members' perceptions of the CAF's working environment for the next few years, if not decades. Finally, the CAF is at a crucial moment in history: the implementation of rapid culture modernization that is currently taking place could either rebuild or ruin CAF culture and climate for years if not decades to come.

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