

Duty to Care: An Exploration of Compassionate Leadership (Abridged)

Deanna Wilson

167 Kinghaven Crescent
Ottawa, Ontario
K2M 0C2
CANADA

deanna.wilson@forces.gc.ca

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study examined the extent to which compassionate leadership could be an approach that will both allow survivors, leaders and an organization to heal from the wounds inflicted by gender-based violence (GBV) and support the necessary culture change within the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF). GBV impacts all persons, including survivors, perpetrators, communities, and organizations. Although Canada is considered a leader internationally for UNSCR 1325 – Women, Peace and Security, as a nation it is not exempt from the negative effects of these grave violations. Worse still, since the introduction of women across the full range of military occupations, CAF masculinist culture and inherent power imbalances have bred an institution rife with GBV. This study finds that trust has been broken with both the members of the CAF and the Canadian public. To create a safe and inclusive environment, a new leadership approach may be needed. A comprehensive review was conducted using various literature and statistics focused on GBV and leadership styles, including methods and best practices from support groups and experts who work with and empower survivors. The research discovered that compassion was essential for the empowerment of survivors on their healing journey. When coupling compassion with leadership, the study suggests that leaders need to find a balance of compassion and wisdom to ensure the needs of all can be heard and attended to. Through compassionate leadership, the CAF may begin the journey of fully supporting the needs of survivors and affect lasting change.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) has been the topic of many media headlines in the past two years. The recurring theme of interest is less related to defending Canada and its interest and more focused on CAF culture. Various stories and personal accounts have not only described an institution that needs culture change, but also depicts a culture whose members have inflicted grave harm onto one another.

As described in Canada’s Defence Policy – Strong, Secure, Engaged (SSE), the CAF is an institution that upholds and protects Canadian values, such as “inclusion, compassion, accountable governance, and respect for diversity and human rights” (Canada, 2017). To do this, the CAF relies on the individual and collective dedication of men, women and non-binary people belonging to the profession of arms. These members are all expected to adhere by the CAF Code of Values and Ethics, which “strengthens the [institution’s] ethical culture” (Canada, 2020) and maintains society’s trust and confidence in the CAF.

Unfortunately, with the increasing number of external reports demonstrating inequalities, unfair treatment, hateful conduct, racism, and discrimination (Deschamps, 2015) the challenges in CAF culture highlight that although the CAF is an equal opportunity employer, the CAF struggles with underlying systemic gender-based violence (Deschamps, 2015). This reality exists in stark contrast to the Code that all personnel promise to uphold.

When comparing these values to the culture that is described in various media accounts, one may question what may be the root cause for such disconnection. The follow-on question would then be: How can the

institution and its members heal, evolve, and move forward to not only protect one another, but also maintain the “special relationship of trust... with the Canadian society” (Canada, 2017).

To pursue any change effectively, leadership is essential. Within the CAF, leadership is a critical component in achieving its mandate and mission. Sailors, soldiers, and aviators are consistently urged to lead and represent Canadian values at home and abroad. Values such as inclusion, empathy, and respect for diversity cannot be protected without employing leaders who also lead with compassion.

This paper is an abridged version of a larger master’s degree thesis on gender-based violence and compassionate leadership and will discuss the major findings of that research. The first section outlines the context of gender-based violence in the CAF. The second section explores how militarized masculinity and power imbalances are not only stifling progress for inclusion, but also limit the ability to eliminate gender-based violence. The third section considers both the consequences and impacts of gender-based violence on the CAF and its membership. The last section illustrates how compassionate leadership may be an approach to not only heal the wounds of survivors of gender-based violence, but also enable an institution to evolve its culture for long-lasting change.

2.0 THE ENEMY WITHIN: GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

Gender-based violence is a threat to men, women, and non-binary people. To women, it is one of the most recognizable dangers and takes various forms including domestic, sexual, and intimate and non-intimate partner abuse. Violence can be interlaced and not only inflicted physically, but also combined with mental and emotional harm “whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations, 1993). Alarming statistics, confirmed in 2020 by the United Nations (UN), demonstrate that “one third of women worldwide [still] experience [gender-based violence], and 18% have experienced such violence in the past 12 months” (United Nations, 2020). These rates have not improved over the decades, which further demonstrates a need to end the persistence of such violence.

To compound the issue, much of the abuse is viewed as a private matter and often blames the survivors for the occurrences instead of holding perpetrators responsible. This blame has manifested in statements such as “boys will be boys” or “she should have known better.” This not only does not support the vulnerable survivors, but unintentionally excuses and condones the violent behaviour. Ultimately, this alienates the survivor further, disempowers and silences them which affects their health and well-being on top of the damage already inflicted by the violence (Rivara et al, 2019).

Gender-based violence has plagued the CAF over the past decades and is proven more and more an endemic across the membership of the Forces. In recent years, magazines and news outlets have conducted investigations that “suggested rampant sexual assault in the military. The magazines estimated that there were 1,780 sexual assaults per year – five per day – in the Canadian Forces” (Postmedia, 2015). These allegations, along with reoccurring accusations in 2021, resulted in several external reports conducted by former Supreme Court of Canada Justices Marie Deschamps, Morris Fish, and Louise Arbour. The findings in 2015 and 2022, demonstrated that the CAF and its members experience ongoing systemic problems with sexual misconduct and gender discrimination. In fact, the CAF’s systemic problems have resulted in a culture rife with gender-based violence.

These reports and their disturbing findings urged senior leaders with the CAF to act. First in 2015 with the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) issuing orders – OPERATION HONOUR – that was intended to support survivors and eliminate gender-based violence (CDS, 2015). In 2018, The Auditor General of Canada however highlighted that the CAF had not “yet fully accomplished what it intended to respond to and support [survivors] and to understand and prevent inappropriate sexual behaviour” (Auditor General, 2018). In response, the CAF issued additional policy in 2020 entitled *The Path to Dignity and Respect (The Path)*

(Canada, 2020). The intention now was to approach the systemic issues more holistically and “[focus] on changing those aspects of CAF culture that contributed [sic] to a permissive environment that allowed incidents of sexual misconduct to occur” (Canada, 2020).

This publication once again proved to be a band aid for the ongoing culture challenges and harm members were experiencing. The publication focuses more on the importance of leadership but lacks defining what style of leadership would be best suited to combat gender-based violence and support survivors. “Further, one may question, if the current leadership continues to struggle with leading this change, then would it not be presumptuous to believe that the suggested path outlined in the policy, will effectively enable a leadership core that currently struggles” (Wilson, 2021).

Further escalating the importance to affect lasting change, in 2021 more allegations – particularly of senior leadership within the CAF – were made public. The Honourable Louise Arbour’s external report then found that, like the Deschamps Report, the culture of ongoing gender-based violence had not improved (Arbour, 2022). In response to the grow number of allegations in 2021, the CAF took immediate action and created a new Level One command – Chief Professional Conduct and Culture (CDS, 2021) whose mandate is to “develop a detailed plan to align Defence culture and professional conduct with the core values and ethical principles [the CAF aspires] to uphold as a National Institution” (CDS, 2021).

Gender-based violence persists within the CAF despite external reports, policies, and programs designed to eradicate its existence. Highlighting the entrenched nature of this violence, in 2019 a Statistics Canada survey of future leaders within the Canadian military colleges exposed that 68 percent of students “witnessed or experienced unwanted sexualized behavior” (Maxwell, 2019). With ongoing and worsen cases of gender-based violence, and despite the enduring efforts of senior leaders, policy creation, and external reporting, “the safety and well-being of members remains tenuous suggesting that perhaps a different approach is needed to truly move the yardstick forward” (Wilson 2021). As supported by *The Path*, leadership is needed and now more than ever a new leadership approach may be what is required to “not only transition the culture, but also heal the institution and its members” (Wilson, 2021).

3.0 ROOT OF THE PROBLEM

Many will describe the CAF as an equal opportunity employer, where women have served in uniform for over 130 years (DND, 2020) in support of protecting their country. Canada also boasts being one of few states since the late 1980s that allows women to serve in similar roles as men in combat (CHRC, 2021) and is a “a world leader in terms of the proportion of women in its military” (DND, 2021). Although Canada claims to be a leader in integrating women in within the CAF, there have been persistent struggles with inequality. Factors contributing to this enduring imbalance across the Forces rest with relationship and understanding of masculinity and femininity, as well as how the inherent power dynamics reinforce these ideals.

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines gender as the characteristics that are socially constructed for men, women, girls, and boys that can vary for each society, and change over time (WHO, 2021). Often society genders the terms masculine and feminine and attributes masculinity to men who are strong, confident, competitive, and aggressive. In the same token, women are seen as more feminine as they more openly demonstrate care and are nurturing and kind. These common societal associations leave little space for men to be caring and women to be aggressive without negative connotations. “Stereotypes [arise] when men exhibit feminine traits, [as] they are weak and when women exhibit masculine traits [they] are seen as “trying too hard” or “one of the boys” (Wilson, 2021). This culturally embedded approach denies one the ability to exhibit any trait at any time without judgement and inhibits one from embracing new approaches to dealing with various situations.

The CAF further reinforces these binary understandings and gendered characteristics as part of their socialization and existing culture. International Relations scholar and gender theorist R.W. Connell and James Messerschmidt's research concluded that one is not born masculine, but rather learn through socialization how to express masculinity (Connell et al, 2005). When applying this concept to the military, Karley Richard and Sonia Molloy, researchers in the field of gender and the military from Pennsylvania State University, suggest that “the institution of the military lends itself to creating, confirming, reinforcing, and maintaining hegemonic masculinities that maintain power and domination over others” (Richard et al, 2020).

In a Canadian context, characteristics such as aggression, conformity to discipline, and violence are fundamental to an institution built on managing and applying violent actions (Whitworth, 2004) and form the foundation of militarized masculinity. Without question, a force dedicated to managing violence to protect Canada and its interest must assert aggression and violence in the application of warfighting. When these attitudes, acts, and behaviours are no longer confined to wartime and begin to be inflicted on CAF members, by CAF members we see the emergence of gender-based violence whether male or female (Deschamps, 2015).

The campaign strategy within the CAF to affect culture change and embrace femininity has fallen to the minorities to champion. Women and non-binary people are often asked to educate others on how to modify behaviours to encourage more inclusion. What this has achieved is merely placing the burden of change on the minority within the Forces and not effectively challenge idealized military masculinities, nor empower more feminine behaviours and attitudes. To balance and strengthen the force and embody a truly inclusive culture, the recognition of each person's differences is as essential as the need to educate “members on the origins of a masculinist culture, how to embrace femininity, and how to balance and effectively [and] employ these attributes” (Wilson, 2021).

Power dynamics and inherent imbalances within the rank structure of the CAF also contribute to the persistence of gender-based violence. “To provide order and united direction, the military utilizes a chain of command” (Wilson, 2021) and what “leaders are responsible for must be accomplished through [the work of] others” (Canada, 2005). According to CAF leadership doctrine, a leader's influence is considered their social power, which is divided into positional power – authority of rank or position, and personal power – reflection of the leader's core values (DND, 2005). When a leader within a masculinist culture abuses their power, the effects may be combined with masculine traits such as dominance, aggression and even violence. Combining such power dynamics with the landscape of the existing culture gives rise to the prevalence of gender-based violence, even in leadership-follower relationship.

The CAF relies heavily on those who may lack the skillset to navigate the change that is necessary to eradicate gender-based violence. Leaders and members have been “socialized in a culture that arguably does not value compassion and equality to the degree expected by Canadians today” (Wilson, 2021). In a culture that “continues to value traits associated with militarized masculinity, like valour and strength... change is still possible,... [but] it will be limited and slow; and change may also be cosmetic” (Johnstone et al, 2019).

In the words of Albert Einstein, “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them” (Wilson, 2021). The need for cultural evolution to eliminate gender-based violence has been recognized by the CAF (DND, 2020). The question remains how: is it achieved by balancing the masculinity and femininity of the force and its membership, (Wilson, 2021), or through discussions regarding the role of power dynamics within a masculinist culture? Whichever approach is taken, “true institutional culture change requires a long-term and generational leadership commitment and occurs when individual beliefs and attitudes align with the values of the desired organizational culture” (Canada, 2020). Undeniably, “leadership is the heart of any transformation. If the culture needs more compassion and needs to value equality [to align more with Canadian values] then leadership must also lead with compassion for all” (Wilson, 2021).

4.0 CONSEQUENCES AND IMPACT

The consequences of gender-based violence affect more than the immediate physical and mental health of CAF members who survive the initial impacts. In addition to survivors, CAF leadership and institutional trust, and operational effectiveness are also all negatively impacted. With such far reaching effects, the elimination and prevention of gender-based violence is necessary to move the cultural evolution yardstick forward.

The aftermath of such violence for survivors can lead to ongoing health problems that range from anxiety to PTSD and moral injury (Rivara et al, 2019). Survivor’s symptoms also do not necessarily correlate with the severity of the abuse (Wilson, 2021). Across the spectrum of gender-based violence, debilitating effects can arise for survivors despite not having suffered extreme abuse (Rivara et al, 2019). Table 1 outlines the various effects gender-based violence can have on survivors. “These symptoms can also overlap and co-exist,... [and the survivor’s] response is personal and not easily predictable” (Wilson, 2021). Because of its complex and enduring effects, the WHO recognizes gender-based violence as a violation of human rights resulting in major public health concerns (WHO, 2013).

Table 1 - Possible Adverse Effects of Sexual Misconduct

Possible Adverse Effects of Sexual Misconduct	
Physical Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Multiple injuries – sprains, fractures, and lacerations - Somatic problems (migraines, nausea, fatigue) - Gynecological and menstrual pain - Amnesia, sleep disturbances - Loss of appetite - Eating disorders - Greater use of health care - Difficulty concentrating
Psychological	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shame & guilt - Denial - Anger, sadness - Fear, Anxiety, Social Anxiety - Drug and substance abuse - Self-mutilation - Minimizing (comparing misdeeds and feeling “it’s not that bad”) - Mood disorders – i.e. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, Depression - Anesthesia (to numb the feeling of feelings of pain) - Suicidal ideation, attempts, completion - Dissociation, flashbacks - Sense of helplessness
Relational and Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Less trusting of others - Fear of Intimacy - Withdrawal, Isolation - Difficulty establishing and maintaining healthy boundaries

(Quebec Institut National de Sante Publique; 2021, Skaine, 2015; Valente et al, 2007)

Survivors “rarely spontaneously report sexual abuse but tend to seek treatment for an array of physical problems related to the violence” (Valente et al, 2007), and can also “experience post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms... years after the assault took place” (Quebec Institut National de Sante Publique, 2021). Further compounding the impact within the CAF, one can assume that survivors of gender-based violence that may not have “demonstrated health related problems years ago, may in fact be suffering today as a result of past experiences” (Wilson, 2021).

Members of the CAF often join with the notion of serving amongst others that also valued loyalty and integrity. When members experience harm at the hands of their fellow CAF members, the impacts go far beyond the surface. Survivors of gender-based violence that experienced these horrors inflicted by other members of the profession also carry the feeling and thoughts that they have been “violated within a small community by someone who should be trustworthy” (Skaine, 2015). Many survivors also cannot escape the ongoing exposure to their perpetrator as they “often know their assailant and work or live in the same environment” (Skaine, 2015). This reality can have devastating effects on their health and morale, and inevitably affect their ability to thrive in the military (Skaine, 2015). Worse still, when the perpetrator comes from within the chain of command or leadership of the member, the effects expand past the survivor and inevitably impact team cohesion as well. Defence Scientists Stacey Silins and Manon Leblanc conducted a study in 2017 that found that “someone in an authority position, someone that led others, and someone to be trusted, violated approximately 63 percent of survivors” (Silins et al, 2017).

When a chain of command is perceived untrustworthy, unsupportive, and even potentially predatory, survivors suffer in silence and their recovery process is often stalled. (Brewster, 2021). In an attempt to better support survivors and enable leadership to have more skills in dealing with gender-based violence, the CAF created the Sexual Misconduct Response Centre and published policies such as DAOD 9005-1 – Sexual Misconduct Response. The CAF however neglected to consider “how rank structures and the chain of command may impact survivors’ ability to advocate for themselves and each other when seeking support, particularly in occupational settings” (Silins, 2020). “In this context, it is difficult for a survivor to come forward; survivors of sexual misconduct feel violated, powerless, and feel that they lack a voice” (Wilson, 2021). To support and empower survivors perhaps more efforts once again need to be applied to how leaders lead and support their members with compassion.

Leadership is necessary to maintain the health and wellness of CAF members. There is a “requirement to support members and develop strong relationships in order to achieve the given mission” (Wilson, 2021). CAF leadership doctrine describes the importance of building trust between leaders and subordinates. These “trust relationships take time to develop [and] can be easily broken by a significant breach of the expectations that [followers] hold” (Canada, 2005). As previously described when leadership is unsupportive and in some cases predatory, trust is inherently broken between members and leaders and can negatively also impact the trust members and society have in the institution.

In 2018, the then Chief of Defence Staff General Jonathan Vance, addressed the Standing Senate of National Security by stating that “leaders need to drive change by providing vision and a consistent personal example that empowers and inspires subordinates to set the conditions for the elimination of sexual misconduct” (Canada, 2019). This statement is true, however, “what is the impact on CAF culture and its members when that same highest-ranking leader was the subject of a sexual misconduct investigation only three years after making the previous statement” (Wilson, 2021)? As the number of senior officers investigated for allegations of sexual misconduct rose within the CAF in 2021, the credibility of Vance’s message, CAF leadership and institutional culture were questioned.

CAF Leadership doctrine states, “three major personal qualities are critical to the development of trust in leaders: leader competence, the care and consideration for others displayed by a leader, and leader character (integrity, dependability, and fairness).” (Canada, 2005) Without care, compassion, and competence, leadership becomes ineffective. Unfortunately, Silins and Leblanc’s research found that an “overwhelming majority of participants described feeling unsupported by at least one supervisor or leader because of their reactions or responses to these incidents” (Silins et al, 2020). These participants found that their “supervisors were either unsure how to respond to these incidents or failed to respond supportively in an attempt to remain neutral” (Silins et al, 2020). The erosion of trust in CAF leadership in responding to gender-based violence has caused a ripple effect extending institution wide. If the “Deschamps report established that the actions of some CAF leaders had destroyed trust in the chain of command” (English, 2017), then perhaps recent transgressions of senior leadership and other CAF members breaks trust even further (Wilson, 2021). Conversely, Silins and Leblanc’s research found that after experiences of gender-based violence, those survivors that had a supportive chain of command felt the empathetic actions of their leaders positively contributed to their well-being and their healing progress (Silins et al, 2020).

Members’ health and well-being are the responsibility of leaders and undeniably contribute to CAF operational effectiveness. Effective operations do not solely rely on healthy personnel. At times underappreciated, but equally critical, sufficient financial resources are necessary for operational success. “Although no statistics exist for the costs associated with gender-based violence in the CAF, there can be many direct and hidden costs” (Wilson, 2021). These resources, although allocated to address these problems, would better serve the Forces elsewhere if gender-based violence was not such a predominant issue in the CAF. Table 2 compares the common civilian economic cost factors to those areas associated with the CAF.

Table 2 - Cost Factors Associated with Gender-Based Violence

Civilian Economic Cost Factors	CAF Costs Factors
Police Services	Military/NIS Services
Criminal Prosecution	Military Justice System/Unit Investigations
Correctional System / Enforcement of Legislation	Military Justice System/Unit Enforcement (Administrative Measures, Postings, Administrative Reviews/Releases)
Lost Wages (survivor and their loved ones)	Members on sick leave (lost productivity)
Health Care	Medical Services (Physical rehabilitation, Mental Health – in house & contracted)
Lost productivity (survivors and their loved ones)	Lost productivity (survivors and their supporting staff at unit devoted to investigations, administrative work)
Survivor compensation programs	Class Action Lawsuits (awarded by Canada of \$900 million – Sexual Misconduct; \$110 million – LGBT Purge)

(Quebec Institut National de Sante Publique, 2021)

The severity of the situation is not fully realized without statistical knowledge of all resources spent. “The costs, however, associated with only survivor compensation, as part of Heyder Beattie (sexual misconduct and discrimination) and LGBT Purge (targeted members for their sexual orientation and gender identity) class action lawsuits, amount to 1.01 billion dollars” (Brewster, 2020). The costs of gender-based violence can be avoided and these resources could be allocated to other areas that would benefit CAF members and Canadians.

“Gender-based violence causes deep suffering and disrespect throughout the CAF” (Wilson, 2021) and the distress extends further than its members. Trust in the leadership and the institution as a whole has been threatened and extends to operational effectiveness. “The energy that was once reserved for the battlefield has now become dedicated to combatting the battles within” (Wilson, 2021). With deep wounds across the institution and the membership, compassionate leadership is the viable remedy.

5.0 EVERLASTING CHANGE: COMPASSIONATE LEADERSHIP

Joining the Forces takes courage. Members agree to prioritize the mission, and effectively other people in need, ahead of themselves. Given the notion of “service before self,” one may think that the membership of the CAF, would possess the foundation of empathy and compassion. As demonstrated, however, there also co-exists an enduring sexualized across the profession, including its leadership. “Rather than the product of a few bad apples, the leadership problem Deschamps refers to could be connected to a failure of the institution to provide leaders with adequate frameworks and tools to effectively respond to unprofessional behaviour and to lead [long standing] organizational change” (Wilson, 2021).

Orders and policies have failed to eradicate the problem and affect culture change. These stagnant efforts may also contribute to subject fatigue that “requires a new and reinvigorated leadership approach with focus on effective communication. Such an approach could allow the organization to deal more effectively with professional conduct, change management and the need to care for members, rebuild institutional credibility, and trust” (Wilson, 2021).

Duty to Care: An Exploration of Compassionate Leadership (Abridged)

Embracing compassionate leadership involves more than being kind to others, but also being present for “the needs the people and the organization unselfishly, and having the wisdom to act in the best interests of both. These actions comprise the essence of compassionate leadership” (Wilson, 2021). This section focuses on three parts. First, compassion and its relationship with gender-based violence, followed by how compassionate leadership offers the CAF an avenue for positive change by describing the traits of compassionate leaders and the benefits of such an approach. The section concludes by outlining how compassion and strength are not mutually exclusive and how leaders can develop skills that will “transform CAF culture, positively impact operations, and facilitate the healing of many wounds” (Wilson, 2021).

The acts of gender-based violence ultimately demonstrates one’s lack of compassion for others. As previously described, the exertion of power over another for one’s own benefit has grave effects to not only the survivor, but also others that may experience secondary and tertiary impacts. To be present for those suffering from the effects of gender-based violence, one needs to hold space without judgement and act intentionally to alleviate suffering; one must act with compassion. This approach would assist survivors in “regain[ing] a sense of power and control and develop[ing] meaningful connection to others” (Swanson, 2020). Figure 1 below demonstrates how compassionate leadership can empowers survivor healing.

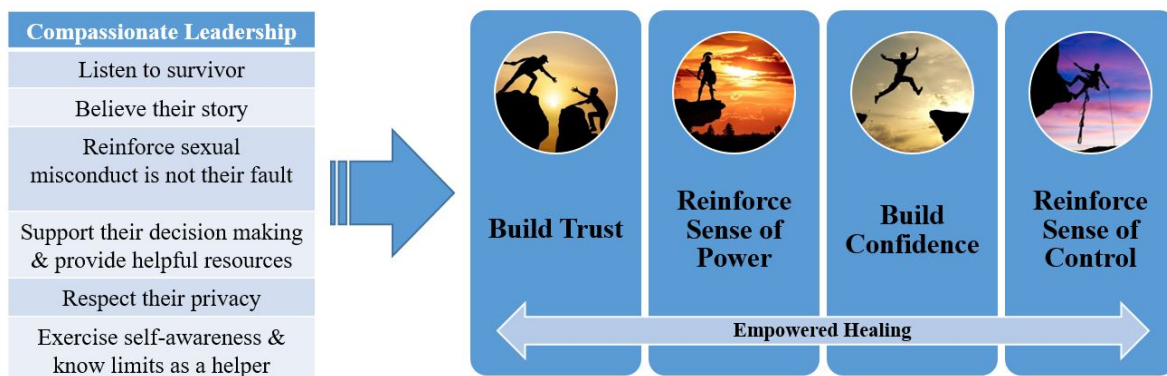


Figure 1 - Leaders Empowering Healing (Michigan, 2021)

In the wake of gender-based violence the CAF has reacted with overly systematic and prescriptive approaches to preventing such violence, such as Operation HONOUR and *The Path*. Although, the recent publication is necessary and a good starting point, “the policy lacks explanations of ‘how’ leaders ought to pursue this change. *The Path* underscores that a ‘toolbox is needed to build the foundation’ for organizational change, yet there is no description of what tools leaders need” (Wilson, 2021).

Today, compassionate leadership is emerging as a recognized approach that focuses “on [what is] best for the individual, the team, [and] the organization and it considers other factors that may influence or impact the situation at hand” (Trotta, 2021). Table 3 describes 16 traits associated with compassionate leaders. The reader should note these are all independent traits.

Table 3 - Traits of a Compassionate Leader

Traits of a Compassionate Leader			
Engaging & Listens with Intent	Trustworthy	Communicates Mindfully	Inspiring Collaboration
Creates Environment of Commitment	Humble – seeks feedback	Inspiring People to Connect to one Another	Removes Barriers within Chain of Command
Unselfish (Non-Careerist)	Sets and Maintains Boundaries	Holds Self to High Standards and Ethics	Seeks Influence, Not Authority
Encouraging & Supportive	Competent	Passionate	Committed to Learning

(Chamorro-Premuzic, 2020; Trotta, 2021)

Considering the popular ideals of a warrior, there may be a perception that the profession of arms would not survive if members possessed some of these traits. “Perhaps those who feel this way would be surprised that even Charles Darwin, popularly known for his theory regarding the ‘survival of the fittest,’ also believed in the power of compassion” (Wilson, 2021). Throughout his research, he found that “those communities, which included the greatest number of the most sympathetic members, would flourish best” (Darwin, 1871). Darwin’s understanding of sympathy at the time represents what is defined as compassion today. “Drawing from his work, while the strongest individual might survive, shared compassion ensures that a community not only survives, but also thrives” (Wilson, 2021). This shared sense of community, care, and compassion lends itself to the necessary traits of a military force in the spirit of solidarity. “Reframing the warrior identity in the CAF as one that is founded firmly on compassion could serve to challenge more toxic and traditionally masculinist constructions of leadership that may enable abuses of power and professional misconduct in the organization” (Wilson, 2021).¹

As far reaching are the negative impacts of gender-based violence, so are the positive benefits of exercising compassionate leadership. Table 4 presents the various benefits to members and leaders within the profession, as well as the institution writ large.

Table 4 - Compassionate Leadership Benefits

Subordinate Impact	Organizational Impact	Leadership Impact
Heal – physical & psychological	Increased Employee Commitment	Gain prosocial identity
Reduce anxiety & stress	Stronger interpersonal connections	Seen as a stronger leader
Sense of being valued	Increased professional development	Connect in meaningful ways
Seek positives in events	Reduction in punitive actions	Seen as more competent
Increase commitment & loyalty	Openness to receiving help	Improved mental health
Feel supported	Organization-wide resilience	Life satisfaction
Raises level of trust	Attract/retain talented & motivated people	Sense of purpose & meaning
Life satisfaction	Creates psychological safety	
Sense of purpose/meaning	Pride in organization	

(Brown, 2021; Dutton, 2011; Eisler, 2017; Hougaard, 2020; Schultz, 2020)

¹ Concurrent to this research, the author co-developed and co-facilitated a conversational series called *Redefining the Warrior*. Each session encouraged participants to examine their perspectives and understandings of the traditional warrior mindset through self-reflection, group discussions, and mindfulness practices. An outline of the conversational series may be found at Appendix 1 – Redefining the Warrior.

In the context of sexual misconduct and culture change in the CAF, these benefits could create a culture where everyone feels empowered, trust could be rebuilt across the membership, and gender-based violence eliminated.

“Compassion is not a skill that comes naturally” (Wilson, 2021). Table 5 provides examples of behaviours, practices, and actions that can improve one’s ability to lead with compassion.

Table 5 - Compassionate Leadership Practices

Compassionate Behaviours, Practices, & Actions	Description
Exercise Self-Compassion	Having genuine compassion for others starts with having compassion for oneself. If one is overloaded and out of balance, it is impossible to help others find their balance. Self-compassion includes: - get quality sleep - reframe setbacks as a learning experience - taking breaks - cultivate positive self-talk - let go of obsessive self-criticism
Check Intention	A leader should view the situation from the point of view of the follower. Ask oneself: How can I best be of benefit to this person or these people?
Practice Compassion	Compassion is a trainable skill through regular practice.
Practice Candid Transparency	Leaders are responsible for providing the guidance that people need. Feedback should be: - candid - specific - clear - direct - transparent
Direct Interaction	Adopt a habit of having at least one direct and candid interaction with a person per day.
Adopt Mindfulness	When individuals practice mindfulness, they gain greater wisdom and leadership competence. Mindfulness allows the leader to remain present with the individual, situation, and problem.

(Hougaard, 2020)

As ‘compassion breeds compassion’, a logical starting point for leaders is to increase their own self-compassion (Schultz, 2020). Schultz’s research suggests that “self-compassion entails feeling a connection to other human beings, the acceptance of one’s flaws and limitations, and a realization that mistakes and suffering are inevitable parts of the human experience” (Schultz, 2020).

Offering compassion to another is perhaps more difficult than exercising self-compassion. “Northwestern University professor Jane Dutton and research scientist at Stanford University Center for Compassion Monica Worline, determined a four-step process to enable leaders to exercise compassion” (Wilson, 2021). Figure 2 below is a visual representation of how to act compassionately.

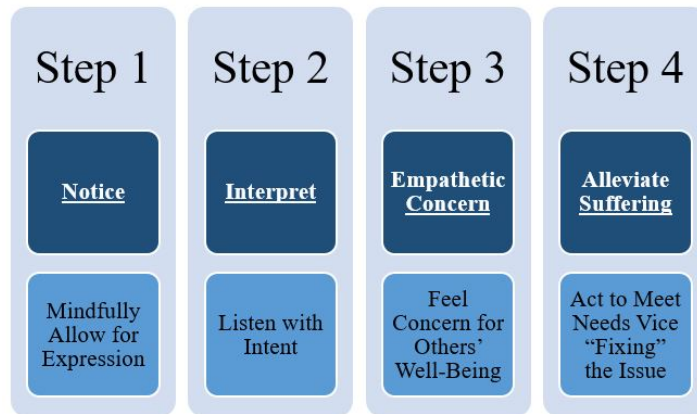


Figure 2 - Compassion as a Process (Eisler, 2017)

“It is also important to acknowledge that as a profession of arms, leaders retain the need to lead CAF members on operations that both meet the national interest and align with national values” (Wilson, 2021). To do so, leaders must exercise wisdom in combination with compassion. Leadership expert Rasmus Hougaard categorizes wisdom as “a deep understanding of what motivates people and how to manage them to deliver on agreed priorities” (Hougaard et al, 2021). Figure 3 depicts a wise compassion matrix that demonstrates differing results based on the various combination of wisdom and compassion.

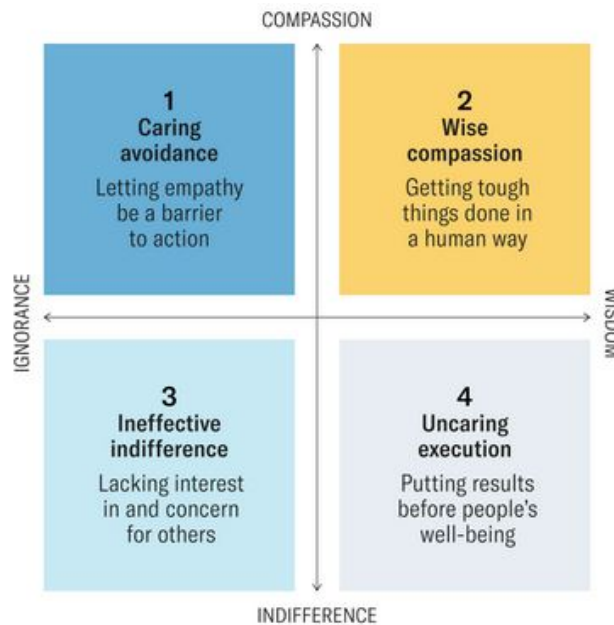


Figure 3 - The Wise Compassion Leadership Matrix (Hougaard et al, 2021)

Quadrant 1 leaders exercise compassion but avoid giving necessary feedback. Quadrant 3 not only lack competence but remain indifferent to their team member needs. Hougaard and his co-researchers propose, In Quadrant 4, leaders are effectively, but demonstrate little compassion, while Quadrant 2 leaders balance “concern for their people with the need to move [the organization] forward in an efficient, productive manner” (Hougaard et al, 2021).

Leading with compassion may carry a stigma of weakness and presents a significant challenge for implementation in the CAF. Leaders need to understand that compassion and strength are not mutually exclusive. In an environment where emoting is discouraged, those leading compassionately are in fact demonstrating great inner strength (Brown, 2020). Dutton and Worline argue that “rather than being ‘soft’ and ‘nice to have,’ when [leaders] look through the lens of strategic capabilities [they] see that care and compassion contribute [sic] powerfully to organizational strengths that allow an organization to succeed” (Dutton et al, 2011). In a military context, U.S. Director of Army Staff, Lieutenant General Walter E. Piatt, described to *New York Times* in 2019 that he used compassion and empathy “in the face of combat in Iraq... for real advantages” (Richtel, 2019; Wilson, 2021).

Leading CAF members with compassion will do more than simply meet the members’ and the institution’s needs. Compassionate leadership also has the potential to shape how our Forces engage in achievement of missions. Specifically, the Canada and its military are commitment to the elimination of gender-based violence globally (Isaksson, 2014). Leading with compassion not only empower CAF survivors to heal; the effects can “transcend to those the institution serves to protect” (Wilson, 2021).

This section has described the traits of a compassionate leader, the benefits and practices of such an approach, and how when layering compassion with wisdom the result is more transformative for relationships and the overall culture.

6.0 CONCLUSION

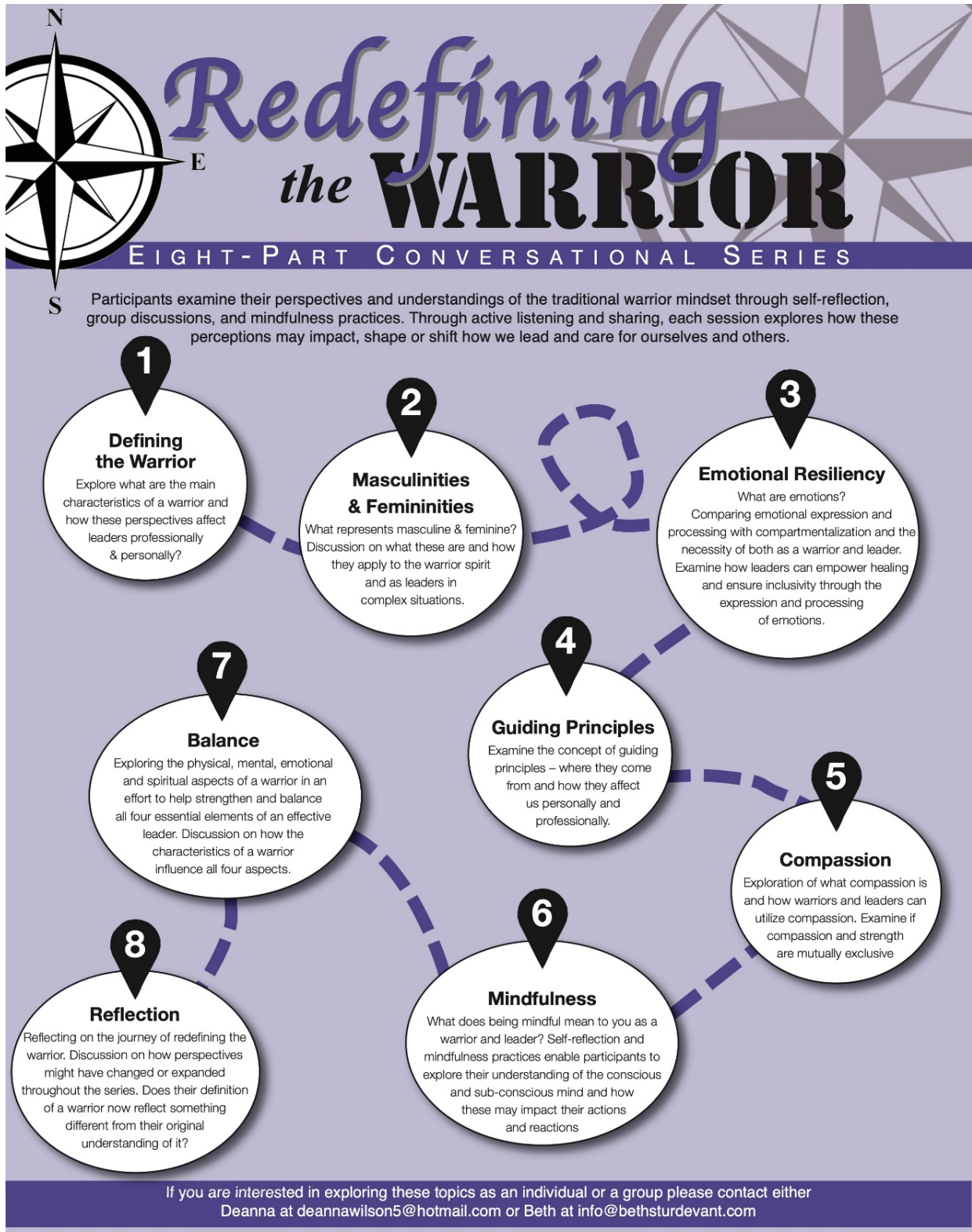
For decades, the CAF has struggled with pervasive gender inequality and gender-based violence. In response, the CAF has delivered various policies, orders, and programs in hopes of eradicating the violence and transforming the culture to be safer and more inclusive. “Yet despite these efforts, the war within ‘friendly-lines’ rages on” (Wilson, 2021).

This study presented that a new leadership approach is required to achieve equality and inclusion and prevent further harm. By examining the context of gender-based violence and the root of the problem within the CAF, it is evident that a toxic militarized masculine force that does not fully understand the impacts of inherent power dynamics, coupled with leaders that lack tools and skills has resulted in lack of trust, betrayal, and ongoing violence. The consequences of this violence extend past the members upon which harm is inflicted. The institution as a whole and its relationship with Canadians, as well as operational effectiveness are also negatively impacted.

This paper suggests compassionate leadership is an approach that supports culture transformations, enables leaders to best support survivors, and creates a stronger institution (Wilson, 2021). When combined with wisdom, compassionate leadership also balances the needs of the individuals and the organization. This paper demonstrated that this approach does not ‘make one soft,’ rather strengthens leaders’ awareness, relationships, trust, credibility, and effectiveness.

In closing, the time to act is now. With persistent gender-based violence plaguing the culture of the CAF and its members, gone are the days of publishing policy that is implemented on one’s own interpretation. To heal from the scathing wounds, “leaders need to listen. They need to believe there is a problem, and they need to be part of the solution” (Wilson, 2021). Most importantly, members, leaders, and the Canadian Armed Forces need to exercise self-compassion and compassion for all.

Appendix 1 – Redefining the warrior



Redefining the WARRIOR

EIGHT-PART CONVERSATIONAL SERIES

Participants examine their perspectives and understandings of the traditional warrior mindset through self-reflection, group discussions, and mindfulness practices. Through active listening and sharing, each session explores how these perceptions may impact, shape or shift how we lead and care for ourselves and others.

- 1 Defining the Warrior**
 Explore what are the main characteristics of a warrior and how these perspectives affect leaders professionally & personally?
- 2 Masculinities & Femininities**
 What represents masculine & feminine? Discussion on what these are and how they apply to the warrior spirit and as leaders in complex situations.
- 3 Emotional Resiliency**
 What are emotions? Comparing emotional expression and processing with compartmentalization and the necessity of both as a warrior and leader. Examine how leaders can empower healing and ensure inclusivity through the expression and processing of emotions.
- 4 Guiding Principles**
 Examine the concept of guiding principles – where they come from and how they affect us personally and professionally.
- 5 Compassion**
 Exploration of what compassion is and how warriors and leaders can utilize compassion. Examine if compassion and strength are mutually exclusive
- 6 Mindfulness**
 What does being mindful mean to you as a warrior and leader? Self-reflection and mindfulness practices enable participants to explore their understanding of the conscious and sub-conscious mind and how these may impact their actions and reactions
- 7 Balance**
 Exploring the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of a warrior in an effort to help strengthen and balance all four essential elements of an effective leader. Discussion on how the characteristics of a warrior influence all four aspects.
- 8 Reflection**
 Reflecting on the journey of redefining the warrior. Discussion on how perspectives might have changed or expanded throughout the series. Does their definition of a warrior now reflect something different from their original understanding of it?

If you are interested in exploring these topics as an individual or a group please contact either Deanna at deannawilson5@hotmail.com or Beth at info@bethsturdevant.com

7.0 REFERENCES

- [1] Brennan, Major Kellie. Canadian Armed Forces, interview by Mercedes Stephenson. 2021. *The West Block - Episode 22, Season 10* (February 21).
- [2] Brewster, Murray. 2021. "A Sea Change: Canada's New Top Military Commander apologies to Victims of Racism." *CBC News*. January 14. Accessed March 4, 2021. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/military-command-mcdonald-vance-1.5873473>.
- [3] Brewster, Murray. 2020. "Military Members Who Report Sexual Misconduct Still Say They're Being Dismissed by the Chain of Command." *CBC News*. October 22. <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/sexual-abuse-harassment-canadian-armed-forces-1.5771855>
- [4] Brown, Maria D. n.d. *Compassionate Leadership: Leaders to Turn Empathy into Action*. Accessed March 9, 2021. <https://www.slideshare.net/mrgwebinars/compassionate-leadership-coaching-leaders-to-turn-empathy-into-action-145863061>.
- [5] Brown, Vanessa. 2020. *The Gendered Division of Emotional Labour and Post Pandemic Reconstruction*. Vol. 1, in *Military Psychology Response to Post-Pandemic Reconstruction*, by Samir Rawat, Ole Boe and Andrzej Piotrowski, 126-148. Jaipur, India: Rawat Publications.
- [6] Canada. 2020. *Department of National Defence and Canadian Forces Code of Values and Ethics*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/services/benefits-military/defence-ethics/policies-publications/code-value-ethics.html>.
- [7] Canada. 2020. *DAOD 9005-1, Sexual Misconduct Response*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/policies-standards/defence-administrative-orders-directives/9000-series/9005/9005-1-sexual-misconduct-response.html>.
- [8] Canada. 2005. *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence.
- [9] Canada. 2019. *Sexual Harassment and Violence in the Canadian Armed Forces*. Ottawa: The Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence. https://sencanada.ca/content/sen/committee/421/SECD/Reports/SECD_Report_harassment_May_19_e.pdf.
- [10] Canada. 2017. *Strong, Secure, Engaged: Canada's Defence Policy*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence. <http://dgpapp.forces.gc.ca/en/canada-defence-policy/docs/canada-defence-policy-report.pdf>.
- [11] Canada. 2020. *The Path to Dignity and Respect: The Canadian Armed Forces Sexual Misconduct Response Strategy*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence.
- [12] Canadian Human Rights Commission. n.d. *Equal Rights for Men and Women in Combat*. Accessed February 7, 2021. <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/eng/content/equal-rights-men-and-women-combat>.
- [13] Chamorro-Premuzic, Tomas, and Cindy Gallop. 2020. "7 Leadership Lessons Men Can Learn from Women." *Harvard Business Review*. April 1. Accessed March 8, 2021. <https://hbr.org/2020/04/7-leadership-lessons-men-can-learn-from-women>.
- [14] Chief of Defence Staff. 2015. *CDS OP ORDER - OP HONOUR*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence.

- [15] Chief of Defence Staff. 2021. Initiating Directive for Professional Conduct and Culture. Department of National Defence.
- [16] Connell, R.W., and James W. Messerschmidt. 2005. "Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept." *Gender & Society* (Sociologists for Women in Society) 19 (6): 829-859. <https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1177/0891243205278639>.
- [17] Darwin, Charles. 1871. *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex*. New York: Appleton & Co.
- [18] Deschamps, Marie. 2015. *External Review into Sexual Misconduct and Sexual*. Department of National Defence. Accessed October 30, 2020. <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/sexual-misbehaviour/external-review-2015>.
- [19] Dutton, Jan E., and Kristina M. Workman. 2011. "Commentary on 'Why Compassion Counts!': Compassion as a Generative Force." *Journal of Management Inquiry* 20 (4): 402-406. https://journals-sagepub-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1177/1056492611421077?utm_source=summon&utm_medium=discovery-provider.
- [20] Eisler, Raine. 2017. "A Conversation with Monica Worline and Jane Dutton: Compassion in the Work Place." *Interdisciplinary Journal of Partnership Studies* 4 (2). <https://pubs.lib.umn.edu/index.php/ijps/article/view/161/155>.
- [21] English, Allan. 2017. "Corruption in the Canadian Military? Destroying Trust in the Chain of Command." *Canadian Foreign Policy Journal* 23 (1): 32-46. <https://www-tandfonline-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/doi/full/10.1080/11926422.2016.1250654>.
- [22] 2020. "Government of Canada." *Canadian Armed Forces and Department of National Defence issue statement in response to Statistics Canada's report on Canadian Military College students' experiences of unwanted sexualized and discriminatory behaviours and sexual assault 2019*. October 8. <https://www.canada.ca/en/departement-national-defence/news/2020/10/canadian-armed-forces-and-department-of-national-defence-issue-statement-in-response-to-statistics-canadas-report-on-canadian-military-college-stud.html>.
- [23] Hougaard, Rasmus, and Louise Chester Jacqueline Carter. 2018. "Power Can Corrupt Leaders. Compassion Can Save Them." *Harvard Business Review*. February 15. Accessed March 8, 2021. <https://hbr.org/2018/02/power-can-corrupt-leaders-compassion-can-save-them>.
- [24] Hougaard, Rasmus, Jacqueline Carter, and Nick Hobson. 2020. "Compassionate Leadership is Necessary - but Not Sufficient." *Harvard Business Review*. December 4. Accessed March 8, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/12/compassionate-leadership-is-necessary-but-not-sufficient>.
- [25] Isaksson, Charlotte. 2014. "Fighting for Gender Equality: Why Security Sector Actors Must Combat Sexual and Gender-Based Violence." *The Fletcher Forum of World Affairs* 38 (2): 49-72.
- [26] Johnstone, Rachel, and Bessma Momani. 2019. "Organizational Change in Canadian Public Institutions: The Implementation of GBA+ in DND/CAF." *Canadian Public Administration* 62 (3): 500-519.
- [27] Maxwell, Ashley. 2019. *Experiences of Unwanted Sexualized and Discriminatory Behaviours and*

- Sexual Assault Among Students at the Canadian Military Colleges*. Ottawa: Statistics Canada. <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/85-002-x/2020001/article/00011-eng.htm>.
- [28] Michigan Government. n.d. "How to Help and Empathetic Responses." *Sexual Assault & Abuse*. Accessed March 16, 2021. https://www.michigan.gov/voices4/0,9249,7-378-87517_87607---,00.html.
- [29] Postmedia News. 2015. "National Post." *Q&A: Why Marie Deschamps Was Asked to Examine Sexual Assault and Harassment in Canada's Military*. May 1. Accessed February 5, 2021. <https://nationalpost.com/news/canada/q-and-a-why-marie-deschamps-was-asked-to-examine-sexual-assault-and-harassment-in-canadas-military>.
- [30] Quebec Institut National de Sante Publique. n.d. *Media Kit on Sexual Assault: Consequences*. Accessed February 23, 2021. <https://www.inspq.qc.ca/en/sexual-assault/understanding-sexual-assault/consequences>.
- [31] Richard, Karley, and Sonia Molloy. 2020. "An Examination of Emerging Adult Military Men: Masculinity and U.S. Military Climate." *Psychology of Men & Masculinities* 21 (4): 686-698.
- [32] Richtel, Matt. 2019. "The Latest in Military Strategy: Mindfulness." *The New York Times*. April 5. Accessed March 9, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/04/05/health/military-mindfulness-training.html>.
- [33] Rivara, Frederick, Avanti Adhia, Vivian Lyons, Anne Massey, and Brianna Mills. 2019. "The Effects of Violence on Health." *Health Affairs* 38 (10): 1622-1629.
- [34] Schultz, Joshua. 2020. *Becoming the Leader You Value: An Act Coaching Intervention for Compassionate Leadership*. Dissertation, Ann Arbor: ProQuest.
- [35] Silins, Stacey, and Manon Leblanc. 2020. *Experiences of CAF Members Affected By Sexual Misconduct: Perceptions of Support*. Scientific Letter, Ottawa: Department of National Defence. <https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/dnd-mdn/documents/op-honour/drdc-rddc-2020-1046-scientific-letter-en.pdf>.
- [36] Skaine, Rosemarie. 2015. *Sexual Assault in the U.S. Military: the Battle Within America's Armed Forces*. ABC-CLIO, LLC. <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/cfvlibrary-ebooks/detail.action?docID=4188092>.
- [37] Stephenson, Mercedes, Marc-Andre Cossette, and Amanda Connolly. 2021. "Former Top Soldier Gen. Jonathan Vance Facing Allegations of Inappropriate Behaviour With Female Subordinates: Sources." *Global News*. February 3. <https://globalnews.ca/news/7614063/jonathan-vance-sexual-misconduct-operation-honour/>.
- [38] Swanson, Charlotte Strauss, and Dawn M. Szymanski. 2020. "From Pain to Power: An Exploration of Activism, the #MeToo Movement, and Healing From Sexual Assault Trauma." *Journal of Counseling Psychology* 67 (6): 653-668. <https://psycnet-apa-org.cfc.idm.oclc.org/fulltext/2020-20388-001.pdf?sr=1>.
- [39] The Auditor General of Canada. 2018. *Report 5 - Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour - Canadian Armed Forces*. Ottawa, ON: Officer of the Auditor General.
- [40] The Honourable Louise Arbour. 2022. *Report of the Independent External Comprehensive Review of*

the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces. Ottawa: Department of National Defence. <https://www.canada.ca/en/department-national-defence/corporate/reports-publications/report-of-the-independent-external-comprehensive-review.html>.

- [41] Trotta, Joanne. n.d. "What does it Mean to Be a Compassionate Leader?" *Emergenetics International* . Accessed March 9, 2021. <https://www.emergenetics.com/blog/compassionate-leader/>.
- [42] United Nations. 1993. *Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women*. December 20. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/ViolenceAgainstWomen.aspx>.
- [43] Valente, Sharon, and Callie Wight. 2007. "Military Sexual Trauma: Violence and Sexual Abuse." *Military Medicine* 172 (3): 259-265. <https://search-proquest-com.cfc.idm.oclc.org/docview/217048812?pq-origsite=summon>.
- [44] Vance, Jonation. 2016. "The Chief of the Defence Staff, General Jonathan Vance, Addresses Sexual Misconduct in the Canadian Armed Forces." *Canadian Military Journal* 16 (3): 6-15. <http://www.journal.forces.gc.ca/vol16/no3/page6-eng.asp>.
- [45] Whitworth, Sandra. 2004. *Men, Militarism & UN Peacekeeping: A Gendered Analysis*. Boulder, Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc.
- [46] Wilson, Deanna. 2021. *Duty to Care: An Exploration of Compassionate Leadership*. Toronto, ON: Canadian Forces College. <https://www.cfc.forces.gc.ca/259/290/23/286/Wilson.pdf>.
- [47] World Health Organization. 2013. *Responding to Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Violence Against Women: WHO clinical and policy guidelines*. Geneva: World Health Organization. https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85240/9789241548595_eng.pdf;jsessionid=ECBBBE0F6845AEFA7DD79359900A7653?sequence=1.
- [48] World Health Organization. n.d. *Gender and Health*. Accessed April 13, 2021. https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender#tab=tab_1.

