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The military as a path to citizenship, integration, and identity: Visible minorities and immigrants' perspectives about the military in Canada

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Visible minorities & immigrants in the Canadian context

- 2016 census data
 - 2/3 of the population growth from 2006-2016 was the result of immigration
 - 1/5 of Canada's total population are foreign-born
 - Highest proportion of immigrants ever recorded in Canada since Confederation
 - More than 7.5 million Canadians identify as belonging to a visible minority population
- Due to the aging population and low fertility rates, immigration is key to ensuring the continued growth of Canadian population
- Share of labour force
 - Canadian born decreased: 78% in 2006 to 74% in 2017
 - Immigrants increased: 22% in 2006 to 26% in 2017



Visible minorities & immigrants in the CAF context

- Employment Equity Act (EEA)
- Challenges for the CAF
 - 9.2% of visible minorities in the CAF vs. 17.8% in the civilian working population (2020)
 - 43.0% in the U.S. military (2019)
- Canadian citizenship
- Security clearance



The aim of the study

- To explore the option of Canada opening military service to immigrants/non-citizens as a means of:
 - increasing the representation of visible minorities in the CAF
 - addressing CAF recruiting challenges
 - providing newcomers who wish to serve in the military a path towards citizenship, integration, and a Canadian identity





Lenses of Gentile's Diversity Framework

Motivators

- Factors that motivate organizations to recognize diversity-related behaviours or trends,
- Includes legal, competitive (e.g., attraction & retention of talented employees), and external (e.g., community groups) pressures

Mindset

- Philosophy and values reflected by the various choices made by an organization to approach diversity and related issues
- Diversity can hold different meanings to different organizations

Methods

- The scope and variety of methods and approaches used by organizations to address diversity and related issues
- Includes methods such as cultural audits, training, and recruiting initiatives; networks/discussion groups/task forces; performance development/career management; and working conditions and benefits policies

Measures

- What the organization is trying to achieve and what is being measured to assess the effectiveness and success of diversity initiatives
- Includes monitoring target goals; evaluating/rewarding individual performance; measuring various diversity interventions, frequency and type of communication regarding; and number of complaints/grievances



Lenses applied to the CAF context

Motivators

- The CAF legal obligations under the EEA
- The National Defence Policy: *Strong, Secure, Engaged*
- Labour demographic pressures on the CAF

Mindset

- The CAF Diversity Strategy

Methods

- The Canadian Forces Aboriginal Entry Program
- The Aboriginal Leadership Opportunities Year
- Summer training programs (military training with Indigenous cultural awareness)
- Diversity training sessions through a variety of mandatory CAF training programs

Measures

- Gender-Based Analysis plus (GBA+)
- EE Plan
- The CAF engages in employment systems reviews of the workforce to identify any systemic barriers to the recruitment, retention, and promotion of these groups



Visible minority & immigrant groups' perceptions of the CAF

- Key findings from three public opinion studies found that:
 - The top reasons the CAF was the least preferred career field were because a military career:
 - is considered “physically risky”
 - is “not interesting,” and
 - “offers little freedom and flexibility”
 - However, the broad range of opportunities offered by the CAF to gain experience in the fields in which they were interested, were recognized
- Wright and Fonséca’s (2016) study showed the reasons visible minorities may not enroll included:
 - A lack of awareness of employment and educational opportunities within the CAF
 - The lengthy application and security clearance process
 - Negative views of the military based on the stigma around the military in their country of origin



Visible minority & immigrant groups' perceptions of the CAF

- CAF Prospect Survey
 - Pop-up survey that is randomly presented to individuals visiting the CAF recruiting website
 - Respondents who were thinking about joining the CAF but were currently undecided about joining were asked about factors that would discourage them from joining the CAF
 - Visible minorities were slightly more likely than non-visible minorities to indicate the following as barriers to joining:
 - Doubts about meeting the selection requirements
 - That they do not know enough about the Canadian military
 - That the recruitment process is too long
 - That a CAF career is too dangerous



CAF Recruiting Survey (CAFRS)

- Between March and October 2018, a total of 4,905 applicants were invited to complete an online version of the CAFRS
- 2,283 respondents completed the survey (response rate of 46.5%)
- Respondents were asked if they were a first-generation immigrant (i.e., someone born abroad who has immigrated to Canada)
 - Respondents were divided into two groups based on their responses to the question:
 - Those born abroad (18.6%) and those born in Canada (81.4%)



Results

- Satisfaction with various aspects of recruiting was high for both CAF applicants who were born in Canada and those who were born abroad

Degree to which recruiting sources were informative: Born in Canada and born abroad.

CAF Information Sources	Born in Canada			Born Abroad			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Recruiters were informative	1,637	4.4	0.9	384	4.3	0.9	0.07
Military career counselors were informative	1,437	4.3	0.8	352	4.3	0.9	0.07
The basic training video was informative	1,462	4.1	0.8	356	4.1	0.9	0.01
The occupation videos were informative	1,516	4.2	0.8	364	4.1	0.9	0.09
The recruiting brochures were informative	1,131	3.8	0.9	287	3.8	0.9	0.02
The Forces.ca website was informative	1,661	4.2	0.9	398	4.2	0.9	0.03

Note. Mean influence scores on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = *Strongly disagree*; 2 = *Disagree*; 3 = *Neutral*; 4 = *Agree*; 5 = *Strongly agree*



Results

- Both CAF applicants born abroad and those who were born in Canada reported similarly high levels of satisfaction with the respectful, friendly, and welcoming atmosphere in recruiting centres
- CAF applicants who were born abroad reported slightly less satisfaction with the level of professionalism of recruiting centres than those applicants who were born in Canada

Recruiting centre atmosphere: Born in Canada and born abroad.

Recruiting Centre Atmosphere	Born in Canada			Born Abroad			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Professional	1,705	4.5	0.6	400	4.4	0.7	0.20
Respectful	1,704	4.5	0.6	402	4.4	0.7	0.12
Friendly	1,706	4.1	0.8	402	4.1	0.8	0.04
Welcoming	1,705	4.1	0.8	400	4.1	0.9	0.09

Note. Bold: Significant differences at $p < .05$. Mean satisfaction scores on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = Completely dissatisfied; 2 = Dissatisfied; 3 = Neutral; 4 = Satisfied; 5 = Completely satisfied



Results

CAF applicants who were born abroad reported a slightly greater influence from many **CAF information sources** compared to those who were born in Canada

Mean influence of CAF information sources: Born in Canada and born abroad.

CAF Information Sources	Born in Canada			Born Abroad			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Forces.ca website	1567	3.7	1.2	379	3.9	1.1	0.19
Recruiting events	1154	3.0	1.5	266	3.3	1.5	0.16
Displays	1172	3.0	1.5	267	3.1	1.5	0.07
CAF social media	1271	3.0	1.4	296	3.2	1.4	0.15
Internet advertising	1312	2.9	1.3	324	3.2	1.3	0.23
CAF commercials	1293	2.9	1.3	294	3.0	1.3	0.07
Information brochures	1146	2.4	1.2	294	2.8	1.2	0.32
Service Canada	1015	2.1	1.2	260	2.6	1.3	0.38
Print advertising	1045	2.0	1.1	257	2.4	1.3	0.37

*Note. **Bold:** Significant differences at $p < .05$. Mean influence scores on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = No influence; 2 = Little influence; 3 = Moderate influence; 4 = Strong influence; 5 = Very strong influence*



Results

CAF applicants who were born abroad reported a slightly greater influence from many **non-CAF information sources** compared to those who were born in Canada

Mean influence of non-CAF information sources: Born in Canada and born abroad.

Non-CAF Information Sources	Born in Canada			Born Abroad			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
Knowledge of other militaries	1365	3.0	1.4	301	3.3	1.3	0.22
Media	1416	2.9	1.3	334	3.2	1.3	0.23
Movies	1349	2.6	1.3	295	2.7	1.3	0.10
TV shows	1289	2.4	1.3	275	2.5	1.3	0.07
Unofficial CAF internet sites/forums	1142	2.3	1.3	264	2.6	1.4	0.24
Video games	1269	2.0	1.2	270	2.1	1.3	0.07

Note. **Bold:** Significant differences at $p < .05$. Mean influence scores on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = No influence; 2 = Little influence; 3 = Moderate influence; 4 = Strong influence; 5 = Very strong influence



Results

Reasons for joining the CAF: Born in Canada and born abroad.

Reasons for Joining	Born in Canada			Born Abroad			Cohen's <i>d</i>
	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	
For new experiences/an exciting life	1688	4.1	1.0	398	4.1	0.9	0.03
To have pride in my job	1682	4.1	1.1	394	4.0	1.2	0.06
For the opportunity to make a difference	1684	4.1	1.0	399	4.1	1.0	0.05
For personal growth (self-improvement, challenge)	1684	4.1	1.0	394	4.2	1.0	0.12
To stay fit/have an active lifestyle	1690	4.0	1.0	397	4.0	1.0	0.02
To serve my country	1683	4.0	1.1	397	4.2	1.0	0.14
For career opportunities	1679	3.9	1.1	396	4.0	1.0	0.14
For challenging work	1682	3.8	1.1	392	3.9	1.0	0.09
For adventure	1682	3.7	1.2	392	3.6	1.2	0.11
For the comradeship	1680	3.6	1.2	395	3.5	1.3	0.09

Note. Bold: Significant differences at $p < .05$. Mean influence scores on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 = No influence; 2 = Little influence; 3 = Moderate influence; 4 = Strong influence; 5 = Very strong influence



Discussion

- The overall direction set by the defence policy *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, as well as by the CAF Diversity Strategy, may have provided what Gentile (1996) refers to as ***motivators*** and ***mindset*** to make some gains in the recruitment of foreign nationals, and to spark conversations between the CAF and the federal departments responsible for immigration and employment
- While these discussions have explored incremental changes to the Skilled Military Foreign Applicants program, and to the National Occupational Classification Codes, in order to open recruiting to non-citizens, action at the ministerial level is necessary to effect any policy changes
- Various ***diversity measures*** can also help the CAF towards achieving greater diversity, such as using the results from the CAFRS



Discussion

- Example of using the results from the CAFRS:
 - Applicants who were born abroad and applicants who were born in Canada were influenced by different factors in their decision to join the CAF
 - This information can be used to inform adjustments to the CAF recruiting plan to better attract visible minorities and immigrant applicants
 - Of note, CAF applicants who were born abroad rated serving their country as one of the strongest influential reasons to join, which may reflect a desire to give back to their adopted country



Discussion

- In terms of *diversity methods*
 - The CAF should consider developing specific initiatives to target potential visible minority applicants from various immigrant communities, such as developing programs for visible minority youth similar to those that have been developed for Indigenous youth or for women
 - The CAF should consider developing a more comprehensive diversity education program for CAF members; currently, the CAF integrates diversity training sessions through a variety of mandatory CAF training programs, including basic training, to enhance the diversity mindset



Conclusion and recommendations

- The results of our study suggest that further changes in policies and initiatives are required to increase diversity in the CAF, including potentially making military occupations available to immigrants who have not yet obtained Canadian citizenship
- It is recommended that the CAF consider:
 - Reviewing their current policies on citizenship (e.g., to allow applicants with landed immigrant status an expedited path toward citizenship)
 - Ensuring future foreign-born applicants have positive experiences and are made to feel welcome and valued
 - Coupling policy changes with the provision of opportunities for developing more comprehensive diversity education programs for CAF members, outreach initiatives targeting immigrants and visible minorities, and streamlining the security clearance process



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