

# **The Socialization of Officer Cadets at the Royal Military College of Canada: Focus Groups Results**

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## Abstract

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This is a report on the Focus Groups component of the research methodology designed to inform a study that will examine the socialization of Officer Cadets at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). Focus Groups sessions were designed to elicit responses to inform the development of a questionnaire and interview instrument for administration to representative samples of the cadet population. This technical memorandum documents the results and analysis of data generated from eight focus groups that took place in May 2005. The group participants were drawn from across the four-year spectrum of academic study to garner the cadets' perspectives on the issues surrounding their socialization at RMC and the extent to which it reflects social change in Canadian society. The sessions also addressed issues related to the influence of RMC in preparing future leaders of the CF to meet the changing demands imposed on military leaders as a result of the paradigm shift in military operations since the end of the Cold War. The analysis of focus groups data indicates that motivation, identity, socialization and social change are key areas for inclusion in the project questionnaire and interview protocol.




## Résumé

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Le présent rapport porte sur les groupes de discussion réunis dans le cadre d'une étude sur la socialisation des élèves-officiers du Collège militaire royal du Canada (CMR). Les séances étaient destinées à recueillir des réponses pour guider le développement grandes questions à aborder dans le questionnaire et les entrevues auxquels participeront des échantillons de la population des élèves-officiers. Ce rapport technique présente les résultats des huit séances en compagnie des élèves-officiers du CMR qui ont eu en mai 2005, ainsi que l'analyse qui a été faite des données recueillies à cette occasion. Les groupes se composaient d'étudiants des quatre années et devaient nous permettre de sonder l'opinion des élèves-officiers à propos des différents aspects de leur socialisation au CMR et d'établir dans quelle mesure ces aspects reflètent la transformation de la société canadienne. Des questions visaient également à déterminer si le CMR prépare les futurs leaders des FC à relever les nouveaux défis qui les attendent à la suite de la réorientation des opérations militaires depuis la fin de la guerre froide. Les opinions et commentaires soulèvent que la motivation, l'identité, la socialisation et les changements sociaux sont des aspects clés à inclure dans le questionnaire et le protocole d'entrevue de l'étude.



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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background

The Canadian military profession, like most other professions (e.g. medicine and law) has had to adapt to social and cultural change in the larger society in recent decades. Such change challenges the status quo in society, and the military profession. Diversity, multiculturalism, gender integration, cultural change, professionalism, and leadership have taken on new meaning and have become embedded in the overall socialization and cultural dimensions that help to shape the image of the profession itself. Added to the complexity of change for the Canadian Forces (CF), is that, while adapting to the new features of war, it has acquired an expanded spectrum of responsibilities that go beyond war fighting to include peacekeeping, peacemaking, security and humanitarian roles alongside governmental and non-governmental agencies.

The nature of the issues is a challenge to the historical and traditional construction of military operations and response, which will likely have an impact on the Royal Military College (RMC) in terms of its socialization and training processes, its culture and its leadership. The issue of socialization is intricately intertwined with these new demands particularly in view of the interdependence and interconnectedness of allied forces in post-modern warfare, and the increasing involvement of non-military personnel. This gives rise to the need for a more comprehensive approach to addressing issues of cultural diversity and interrelationships that include, but are not limited to, language, history, politics, religion, anthropology, and sociology.

Social interaction suggests that human behaviour is shaped by the groups to which people belong and the interaction that takes place within these groups (Stephan and Stephan, 1990). Socialization therefore, involves the process of change that a person undergoes in response to social influences with the development of self-concept, identity and attitudes, disposition and behaviours of the individual being central to the process (Stephan and Stephan, 1990). Socialization also relates to the individual's adaptation and conformity of one kind or another, to role expectations and to the norms and values of society (Gecas, 1981). In this context, the socialization processes that officer cadets undergo at RMC, are critical to their success at the college generally, and at a later stage in the CF, specifically. As outlined above, cadets' success will depend, to a large extent, on the ways in which they adapt to their environment, and the interaction that takes place in the groups to which they belong, as well as in the general RMC environment. Socialization embodies the change process that they experience in conforming to role expectations and to the norms and values of their new environment.

### 1.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are as follows: 1) to explore and analyze the processes of socialization engaged in by RMC in carrying out its mission of developing the future leadership of the CF; (2) to examine selected key issues including cultural change, diversity, gender integration, recruitment and retention, career choice and expectations, leadership training, military ethos and professionalism, all of which are central to training and development of officer cadets as future leaders in the military; and 3) to determine the extent to which legislation and social change in

Canada have impacted the training and development processes at RMC. Socialization plays a prominent role in the manner in which the CF leadership copes with social change and becomes a function of mission success.

## **2.0 SOCIALIZATION ISSUES - FOCUS GROUPS**

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The research method for the study is divided into four segments: a review of the existing literature, focus groups, a questionnaire, and an interview protocol. A review of research on military cadet populations indicates that motivation, identity (Franke, 2000; Guimond, 1999), diversity, gender integration (Davis, 2001; Smith & McAllister, 1991), values (Winslow, 2003; Franke & Heinecken, 2001), and leadership training (National Defence, 2005; Walker, 2005; Hammill, Segal & Segal, 1995), are areas of importance related to cadet experience. The focus groups were aimed at eliciting the responses of RMC cadets to these issues and to inform the questionnaire and interview instruments. This technical memorandum reports only on the focus groups, providing an analysis of cadets' responses to the areas of importance identified above, which will subsequently be used to incorporate the cadets' perspectives and concerns into the larger study.

The results from the focus groups will inform the formulation of the questions for the survey questionnaire and the interview protocol. The survey questionnaire will be a bilingual tool that will be administered on-line, to a representative sample of the RMC student population (75% Anglophone and 25% Francophone). The data collected through this instrument will generate a quantitative dimension to the study. The results from the focus group sessions will also assist in developing questions for the interview protocol.

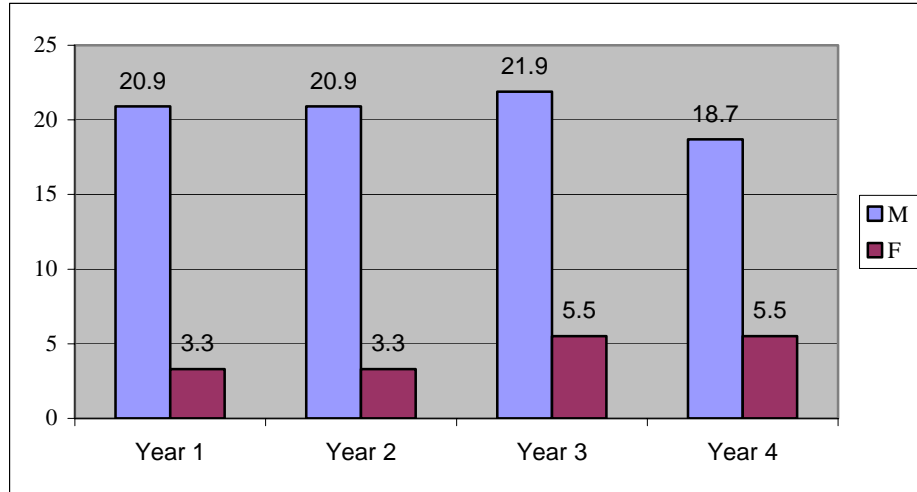
### **2.1 Structure and Organization of Sessions**

In total, 91 cadets attended the focus groups, thereby representing 9.5% of the cadet population at RMC during the 2004-2005 academic year. Two focus groups were conducted for each year, for a total of eight sessions. The participants were notified of the focus groups through the chain of command at RMC, in response to an official announcement that was promulgated (Annex A). The Focus Groups were established under the approval of the chain of command, i.e. the Director of Cadets. This was necessary to avoid disrupting cadets' schedules or impinging too much on their study time. Consequently, the sample of the cadet population was obtained with the assistance of the cadet wing commander, so that the author's direct involvement with the cadets only occurred in making the appointments and in conducting the focus groups.

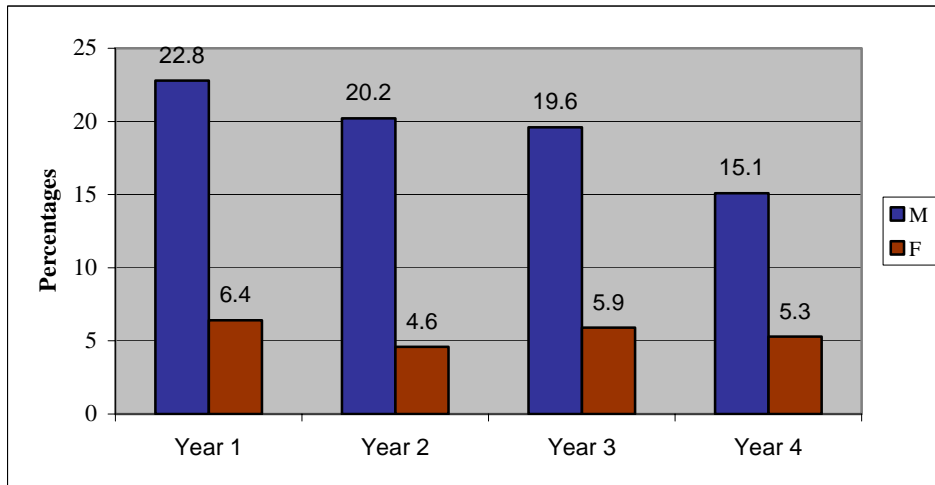
Eight categories of questions (identified earlier) were developed to include the issues of importance for focus groups. The questions used in the conduct of the focus groups are listed in Annex B. A narrative (Annex C) was presented to the participants, outlining the protocol of the focus groups, the voluntary nature of their participation, and a request for their permission to use a tape recorder. Participants were given a consent form (Annex D) to read and sign, once they volunteered for the session.

## 2.2 Participants and RMC Population Compared

The representation of males and females in the focus groups generally mirrored the representation of these populations at RMC. Women comprise 22% of cadets at RMC, and accounted for 17.6 % of focus group participants, while males comprise 78% of cadets at RMC and accounted for 82.4% of the participants. Figure 1 below illustrates the participation by year of academic study, and sex of participants. Figure 2 provides a similar distribution of the general cadet population for the 2004-2005 academic year, by year of academic study, and sex, for comparative purposes.



**Figure 1. Focus Group Participants by year of study, and by sex.**  
*\*Percentages in the figures are rounded off to the nearest decimal.*

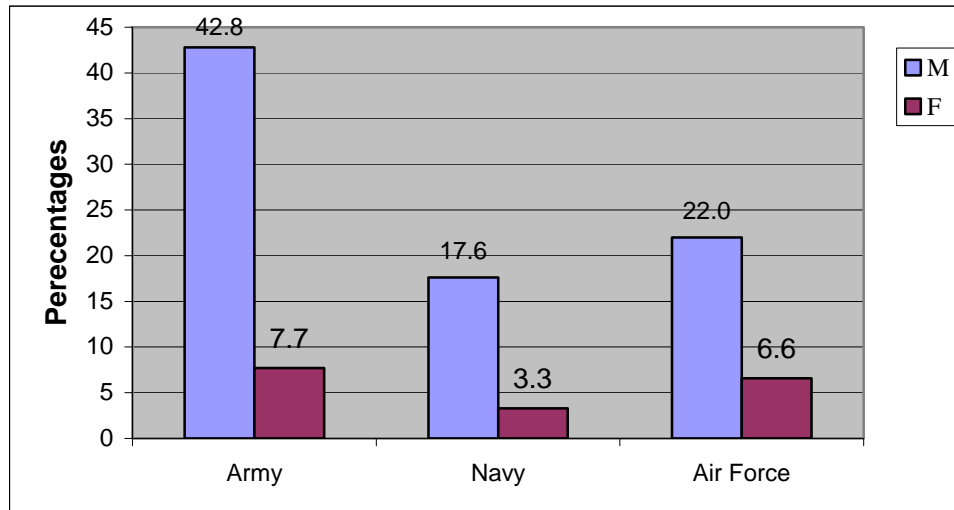


**Figure 2. 2004-2005 Cadet Population by year of study and by sex** *\*Percentages in the figures are rounded off to the nearest decimal.*

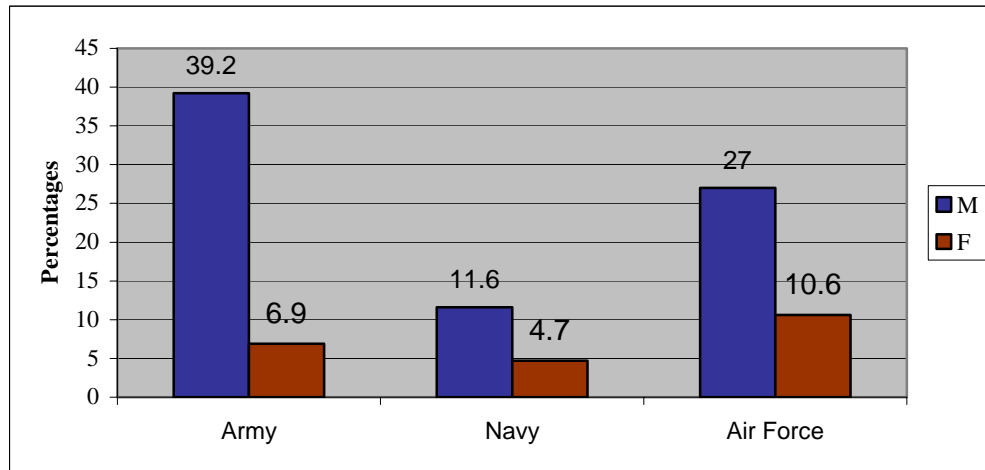
*Source: Statistical data received from the Office of the Registrar Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, ON.*

## 2.3 Environmental Services Representation

Overall, representation of the environmental services by cadets participating in the focus groups was reflective of their representation in the general cadet population at RMC. To this end, as presented in Figure 3, the Army, Navy, and Air Force were represented by 42.8, 17.6, and 22% males, respectively, while the female representation in these services was 7.7, 3.3, and 6.6%, respectively. Figure 4 is provided to show the proportion of males to females in the general cadet population for the 2004-2005 academic year. In this respect, the environmental services reflect an allocation of males in the Army, Navy and Air Force as 39.2, 27.1 and 11.6, respectively. For females, the allocation is 6.9, 10.6, and 4.5%, respectively.



*Figure 3. Focus Group Participants by Service Environment and by sex. Figures are rounded to the nearest decimal.*



*Figure 4. Cadet Population by Service Environment and by sex. Figures are rounded to the nearest decimal.*

*Source: Data obtained from the Office of the Registrar, Royal Military College of Canada, Kingston, ON.*

## **2.4 Non-Generalizable Data**

As the focus group participation data do not represent a randomly selected stratified sample of cadets at RMC, they cannot be generalized to its entire cadet population. However, the focus group data provide a means of confirming the applicability of instruments previously administered to the CF and military cadet populations. A summary of the three key issues, and related sub-issues discussed in the focus groups are provided below. Even though the officer cadets are essentially a homogeneous group at RMC, they present a variety of perspectives on: motivation for enrolling at RMC, identity, and the impact of social change.



## **3.0 MOTIVATION FOR ENROLLING AT RMC**

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The motivation for enrolling at RMC is one of the key factors in the study of the socialization of the RMC cadets and was raised as a discussion point in the focus groups. The objective was to get the cadets to speak openly about their career choice and their aspirations in order to better understand the extent to which they anticipated having a long-term military career. This perhaps, would also help to determine the impact of their motivation and expectations on their subsequent retention at RMC and ultimately in the CF. The cadets provided a number of reasons for enrolling at RMC with the most frequent responses categorized under the headings of: 1) education; 2) military career; 3) financial support; and 4) security.

### **3.1 Education**

The campaign process for recruitment of new cadets for RMC identifies a free education as one of the major advantages of enrolling at the college (The Withers' Report, 1998). This seems to resonate strongly with the cadets. They went on to describe this advantage not only in monetary terms but also in terms of acquiring a prestigious degree that they believe has tremendous marketability in the civilian sector in the longer term. In addition, they felt privileged for the extent to which they can enjoy the luxury of one-on-one interaction with the professors, which they claim, is unheard of in the civilian universities. Many of the cadets stated that they wanted to attend university but did not have the financial means to do so nor did they want to be burdened with loans when they graduated. For them, RMC became a viable choice even though they are required to complete five years' of obligatory service after graduation.

### **3.2 Military Career**

The pursuit of a military career was the second most frequently cited reason for enrolling at RMC. Some cadets indicated a need to "serve my country"; while others spoke of wanting a career that was adventurous, provided the opportunity to travel and to do challenging work. For them, a military career was the obvious choice and a small percentage of them spoke in terms of having a long military career with the CF. There were isolated cases where some cadets always "wanted to be a soldier". Some articulated the idea that RMC is a stepping-stone to becoming an officer in the CF, while others indicated that a military career would provide them with the opportunity to work at the international level in a way that is quite different from working with non-governmental agencies such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).

### **3.3 Financial Support**

For most cadets, financial support went beyond a free education. They discussed the importance of having their finances looked after while at the college, allowing them the time to concentrate more fully on their studies. They generally acknowledged that unlike RMC cadets, not many students are paid to attend university, although they may have income through part time and summer employment. Such students, they contend, must cope with the challenge of working and maintaining good grades. However, they did recognize that civilian students have a different advantage in this respect, in terms of developing life skills that will assist them in functioning in the adult world upon graduation. They provided examples such as negotiating a lease, managing a household income, and balancing domestic and career responsibilities. Some cadets expressed a desire to take on some of these challenges for themselves in order to learn the life skills that most of their cohorts at civilian universities acquire when they live away from home. Overall, the cadets articulated a desire to become more self-sufficient by the time they graduate from RMC.

### **3.4 Security**

Security was described in terms of having a guaranteed job after graduation and not having to compete with the civilian graduates for limited opportunities in the job market. The compulsory five years that RMC graduates are required to serve in the CF, were perceived by these cadets as minimal with the added advantage of securing a job for the first five years after graduation. In some cases however, cadets spoke of looking forward to extending that period into a military career, from which they hope to retire. Others felt that they would be prepared to remain in the CF after their compulsory service as a military officer if they enjoyed their work and if it was rewarding for them. Some were uncertain of their plans after completing compulsory service, while others were adamant about leaving. However, the cadets generally appreciated the fact that unlike civilian students (Queen's University population was generally their reference group), they will not have huge student loans to repay after graduation. Some even pointed to the fact that they were already contributing to an excellent pension plan, which gave them a great advantage over their civilian counterparts.

## **4.0 IDENTITY**

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In order to establish the cadets' perception of their relationship with the CF as members of RMC, the issue of identity was raised. This was an attempt to determine if the cadets felt that they were identified, or identified themselves as, junior professionals or junior leaders, as the literature suggests (Fodor, 1987; Guimond, 1999), or junior CF personnel in training. It also provided the opportunity for the cadets to give their perspective on the issue. For example, how do they identify themselves, how are they identified by faculty and staff, by their peers, and how do they identify themselves outside of the college, particularly with family and friends. This issue generated a variety of responses in addition to those identified here. However, the three most common identities provided by the cadets were those of: 1) student, 2) specialization or area of study, and 3) member of the CF.

### **4.1 Student**

The overwhelming majority of cadets stated that they identify themselves as students and that they are generally treated and identified by faculty, staff and their peers, as such. Similarly, they identified themselves as students in these relationships. However, cadets negotiated their own identity to their advantage outside of RMC, depending on the circumstances. For example, when visiting a car dealership, they indicated that they would automatically identify themselves as members of the CF. This affiliation not only indicated that they had a paying job vice being students, but it might also entitle them to any special privileges that may have been extended to members of the CF, generally.

Cadets contended that due to the daily interaction with RMC professors and the power distance between themselves and professors, they were always perceived as students. In addition, they felt that due to the focus on academics during their time at RMC, cadets interacted and identified with one another as students. However, in terms of squadron affiliation, the squadron commander relates to them in a military fashion, treating them either as officers in training or as officer cadets. First year cadets believed that by the time they reach their fourth year, they will probably identify themselves as CF officers. However, in this particular sample, fourth year cadets tended to also identify as students.

### **4.2 Specialization (Area of Study)**

The cadets frequently used their specialization to identify themselves at the college. Engineering was the most often cited area of study, reflecting the number of students in engineering programs at RMC. Most of the cadets' discussion centered on the fact that they are involved in this work most of their time at RMC and they felt that stating that they were students in engineering, for example, seemed the most appropriate and most realistic for them. In some cases where cadets

identified themselves as students, they pointed to the fact that they perceived this process as a necessary stepping-stone to reach a greater goal – obtaining the qualifications to become an officer of the CF or an opportunity to obtain a degree that would enhance their options for employment.

### **4.3 Member of the Canadian Forces**

Some cadets identified themselves as members of the CF or as officers of the CF, and frequently identified the environment with which they are affiliated. However, it subsequently became apparent that they simplified their identity in informal settings external to the college because they felt many people do not know much about RMC or what it does. They further stated that because of this lack of knowledge, even though cadets make an effort to explain that RMC is a military college and is located in Kingston, people generally tend to associate it with Queen's University. A few cadets even pointed out that they themselves did not know about RMC prior to arriving at the recruitment centre.

## **5.0 IMPACT OF SOCIAL CHANGE**

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Social change in Canadian society was raised in order to gauge the cadets' knowledge and/or awareness of Canadian social values and issues such as diversity, diversity training, and gender integration. Various legislative Acts (including the *Canadian Human Rights Act* of 1977, the *Charter of Rights and Freedoms* of 1982, the *Employment Equity Act* of 1986, and the *Multiculturalism Act* of 1988) were cited as the threshold of social change in Canada and provided the cadets with more exposure to the value system in Canadian society as a means of stimulating discussion. Diversity, diversity training, gender integration, language, values, and leadership training were the focal points in this discussion.

### **5.1 Diversity**

The cadets brought a common perspective to the interpretation of diversity by relating it to geographic or regional location rather than ethnic diversity. They hinged this on the observation that the population at RMC comes from across Canada, and thus exposes them to a plethora of cultural and regional differences. However, when asked about ethnic and cultural diversity, such as visible minorities, Aboriginals, and gays and lesbians, for example, the cadets stated that both visible minorities and Aboriginals were minimally represented at RMC and that in either case, they could probably be counted on one hand. In terms of gays and lesbians, they said that sexual orientation was not an issue for them and moved on instead to discuss the other issues of diversity. Some cadets from western Canada expected to find a higher representation of Aboriginals since, according to these cadets, Aboriginals have significant representation in some of the western provinces. Yet, others felt that the military has historically been a white male domain and that its population reflects the fact that it is mostly white males who generally apply to join the Canadian military. They used this assumption to explain the absence of a wider range of different ethnic groups at RMC.

### **5.2 Diversity Training**

In response to the issue of diversity training, the cadets felt that isolation in the RMC environment for four years was a method of diversity training of itself. However, their discussion of diversity for the most part, focused on geographic location. The cadets felt that the training that takes place to prepare soldiers for deployment included diversity training and was adequate to cope effectively in carrying out a mission. However, some of them acknowledged that since Canada is becoming more diverse and the CF is increasingly engaging in multinational operations, diversity training will become more important. To this extent, they believed that diversity training is useful and should ultimately be provided formally at RMC.

### 5.3 Gender Integration

The discussion on gender integration did not generate as vigorous a discussion as some of the other issues such as identity, language, leadership training, values and the rules-based culture of RMC, for example. Perhaps this was due to the small representation of females that participated in the focus groups. However, both males and females indicated that among their peers, there is no gender difference in treatment. Some females indicated that even though they are sometimes the only female in the classroom, they do not perceive it as a problem, nor is it an issue for them. Nevertheless, female cadets generally stated that they are frequently teased by some of their male peers that physical training requirements are made easier for them as females, in order to facilitate their success. Some of them were angered by such remarks and explained the extent to which they train, much as the males do, to perform at the required levels. In providing examples, they spoke of the discomfort that they sometimes experience with some of the training material and equipment. Accordingly, it makes training more difficult for them, but they do not quit. In any event, females felt that they are denied credit for their physical ability, because of their sex.

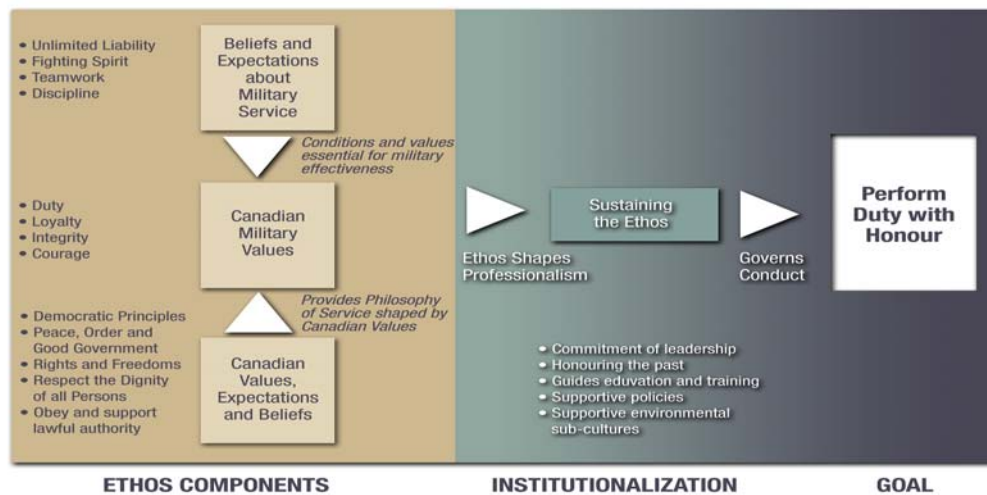
### 5.4 Language

The discussion on socialization generated much interaction from both English and French cadets. It became quite obvious that there is a great language divide between the Anglophones and Francophones to the extent that they rarely socialize together. For the Anglophones, the divide arose primarily from their own inability to converse in French with the Francophones. They concluded that the time devoted to studying French is insufficient and that the Francophones have the advantage of learning English more quickly, in view of the disproportionate amount of English cadets relative to French cadets. As an example, they identified the effort made to pair English and French students together in residence, as a failed attempt for the English population, because of the disproportionate ratio of English to French cadets (3:1). Consequently, cadets felt that the efforts made to promote learning the French language cannot be effective for the English cadets, as they ultimately socialize for the most part, with cadets who share their own mother tongue. Essentially, each group gravitates towards its own as it simplifies the situation even though it creates a division within the cadet ranks.

Some cadets whose mother tongue was neither English nor French and who already spoke multiple languages including English stated that for them, the situation of learning a Canadian second official language was particularly difficult. They explained that in some instances, the situation was exacerbated by the fact that they have to learn French through a second or third language, even a fourth or fifth in some cases. They felt that this situation poses an enormous challenge for them in learning French and also restricts their socialization with the French cadets.

## 5.5 Values

The objective was to establish how cadets felt about their values and whether they believed that the environment at RMC had any impact on them in terms of influencing their value system. In addition, the aim was to fully understand the cadets' perception of whether their values were in conflict with the values of RMC (i.e., Truth, Duty, Valour) outlined in the RMC Handbook and/or the CF military values (i.e., Duty, Loyalty, Integrity, and Courage) as expressed in *Duty with Honour The Profession of Arms in Canada* as outlined in the first section of Figure 5 below, and whether they understood and respected these values.



**Figure 5. The Military Ethos**  
**Source: *Duty with Honour The Profession of Arms in Canada* (The Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, 2003, p.33).**

It was important to make the connection between beliefs and expectations about military service, (i.e. unlimited liability, fighting spirit, teamwork, and discipline) and the way in which these converge with Canadian values, expectations and beliefs (i.e. Democratic Principles, peace, order and good Government, rights and freedoms, respect for the dignity of all persons, and obey and support lawful authority). To a large extent, cadets believe that their values have remained intact and that their values are aligned with those that RMC promotes, due to the fact that they met RMC's recruitment criteria.

The cadets were provided with Figure 5, the first section of which was identified as the essential components of the military ethos, encompassing the basic tenets of military conduct. The

discussion revolved around the values outlined in this section to facilitate discussion in reference to the link between the Canadian society and the CF. Those cadets who had read *Duty with Honour* felt that they had a good awareness of the CF values, while those who had not, felt that they had only a basic understanding and respect for the significance of unlimited liability, teamwork, discipline, duty, loyalty, and respect for the dignity of all persons. However, a minority of the cadets associated some of these values with their experiences at RMC, citing discipline, duty and respect for the dignity of all persons as examples of values being inculcated. In terms of teamwork, they again compared themselves to Queen's University students. They contended that if RMC cadets and Queen's students were brought into a room and each group given a task to complete, the cadets felt that undoubtedly, Queen's students would stand around making introductions, while RMC cadets would go about getting the task done. They could not explain the reason for their perceptions of the difference in approach but they were confident that their approach would be to get the job done.

Although cadets respected these values as well as those of RMC, they were very critical of some of the college's traditional rules and regulations and as a result, they have devised their own methods of circumventing them and mentally rewriting the RMC Motto to reflect how they feel they must respond to it. Their version, according to them, embodies their response to the antiquity and irrelevance of the traditional rules and regulations, and reads: Truth, Duty, Valour and don't get caught! To emphasize their point, they generally acknowledged that a good day for them was getting through the day without getting caught.

## 5.6 Leadership Training

The issue of leadership training for RMC Cadets led to discussions of the ways in which leadership is perceived from the college perspective as opposed to that of the cadets. For example, the cadets were vehemently critical of the system and contended that their leadership training is only found in books and not in practice at RMC. Other criticisms included characterizing it as a punitive system that demonstrates a lack of respect for subordinates. As far as the cadets were concerned, the college embraces a system by which cadets are punished for making mistakes instead of being given the opportunity to learn from them. As a result, cadets hide their mistakes in order to avoid punishment. They also indicated that while they have been exposed to leaders that they would not want to emulate, such poor leadership was actually a good lesson in leadership for them. In spite of lessons learned from such negative role modeling, the cadets articulated the need for exposure to positive role models that would enhance their own leadership development.

In articulating their interest in developing as leaders, cadets indicated that current leadership does not explain what one has done wrong and what one should have done instead. Among the suggestions on leadership that the cadets offered, the one that stood out most was "let us not be afraid to make mistakes. If we mess up, that's how we learn". In terms of the relationship between the cadets and their superiors, the cadets felt that there was an obvious power distance that separated the two groups. This positional power distance surfaced earlier when cadets acknowledged that they did not see themselves as junior professionals nor were they treated as such by their superiors or by anyone at the college. They expressed disappointment that this was



the case at an institution such as RMC, which is responsible for developing leaders for the military.

Some of the general concerns across the full spectrum of cadets revolved around excessive and outdated rules that they thought could be revised or removed altogether. One example had to do with cadets having to wear winter gloves for a specified period, even when temperatures were usually high. Cadets felt that these rules did not allow them to take any responsibility for themselves or for their actions and it made going off to phase training in the summer very difficult, because in that setting, they must assume these responsibilities. Upon their return to RMC, they found it equally frustrating because they have to revert to being led by the hand on a twenty-four hour basis, once again.

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## 1. 6.0 DISCUSSION

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The key topics identified for discussion in the focus groups were reasons for enrolling at RMC, identity, and the impact of social change on cadets' socialization at RMC. The broad range of discussion of the issues in some cases indicated that cadets did not possess a full grasp of them. However, in other cases, the cadets seemed quite knowledgeable and were able to associate the issues with their RMC experience. Motivation for enrolling at RMC generated a diverse response ranging from a childhood dream to seeking adventure and working at the international level. Similarly, much uncertainty emerged in terms of their career aspirations in the CF. For instance, while some cadets envisioned a long term military career, others felt their military career would terminate after compulsory service in the CF, and others were not sure of their intentions immediately following compulsory service.

Cadets responded to the concept of identity in an ambiguous manner citing their specialization or area of study as the key identifier as a student. Although they are being prepared for a military career in the CF, which implies specialized training, the cadets seemed to find it more appropriate to identify themselves as students. This challenges the "junior professional or junior officer" concepts by which they are identified in the literature (Fodor, 1987; Guimond, 1999; Franke, 2000). Contrary to the RMC Cadet Handbook, cadets did not link their status or purpose at RMC to an obvious affiliation with the CF. That affiliation is fully outlined in the Handbook in the following statement as being the ultimate objective of the RMC officer cadet: "As an officer-cadet at RMC, you have one ultimate objective – to be commissioned as an officer in the Canadian Forces" (RMC Cadet Handbook, 2004:3).

Critical aspects of social change that impact the socialization process at RMC emerged with diversity, language, values and leadership training dominating the discussion. Cadets valued the diversity of the cadet population that comes from various locations across Canada. They pointed out the richness of the convergence of cultural differences and the level of camaraderie that develops into long-term friendships in spite of these differences. They recognized that the ubiquitous language barrier between the English and French imposes limits to their integration that ultimately results in the creation of two groups as a mechanism of convenience. The cadets did not become very involved in concepts of cultural diversity frequently examined in the CF from a variety of perspectives including gender (Davis & McKee, 2005; Holden & Davis, 2005; Winslow, 1999), ethnicity (MacLaurin, 2005; Capstick et al, 2005; Leuprecht, 2005) and sexual orientation (Lagacé-Roy, 2005; Pinch, 2000; Park, 1994).

Cadets linked values and leadership training in the discussion by utilizing the rules-based/values-based paradigm. For example, in suggesting a need to re-examine what they termed "outdated" rules, cadets openly acknowledged their violation of RMC/CF values by consciously breaking the rules and avoiding getting caught. They explained this as a matter of necessity and its significance in determining whether or not they had a good day. Similarly, cadets were critical of the hierarchical relationship between superiors and subordinates (cadets) particularly in terms of respect and its potential impact on their leadership training. They indicated that it clearly diverges from the leadership theory that they have studied. They also felt that "lessons learned

opportunities” in relation to their own mistakes could be captured as an effective component of their leadership training.

Generally, cadets felt that their values remained intact since becoming officer cadets at RMC. This reflects Bercusson’s viewpoint cited by English (2004) that contends that some doubt surrounds the extent to which the intensity of the socialization process impacts the internalization of military values. It is Bercusson’s belief that the values that a person brings to officer training are critical in determining the degree to which the military ethos will be embraced. The survey questionnaire and the interview protocol will consider these arguments by addressing the issues of equity, diversity, and leader characteristics, in order to assess the extent to which the cadet population at RMC embraces the tenets of the military ethos identified in *Duty with Honour the Profession of Arms in Canada* (2003), the *Canadian Forces Leadership Institute Professional/Leader Development Framework* (2005), and *Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Conceptual Foundations* (2005).

## 7.0 CONCLUSION

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The focus groups were held to elicit the perspectives of cadets on key issues identified in the literature as significant to the socialization of officer cadets at RMC. As an instrument of the research design, the focus groups sessions provided the opportunity to identify experiences that will inform the questionnaire and the interview instrument of the study. The cadets provided their responses to the issues that were raised, expanding on some of them and introducing issues of interest to them that were not identified among the key issues.

The focus groups' discussion of the selected issues associated with socialization of Cadets at RMC revealed that in some cases, they did not possess a good grasp of some of the issues, but in other cases, they had a comprehensive understanding of others. There was also a level of ambiguity surrounding the cadets' interpretation of some of the issues. Values and leadership are examples where there was some ambiguity. For example, the values of honesty and obedience are openly tampered with when the cadets acknowledged knowingly breaking the rules and covering up that violation. In spite of the claim that these rules are outdated and irrelevant, consciously breaking them and subsequently covering it up reflects negatively on the type of officer that will graduate from RMC and his/her commitment to the military ethos.

Cadets' motivation for enrolling at RMC was diverse and indicated that it was only in a minority of cases where there was a clearly defined intention of having a military career to serve one's country. The variety of reasons provided for enrolling, raises concerns about recruitment and retention and its implications for the CF, for both the short term and long term. It also suggests that there should perhaps be a re-evaluation of the recruitment strategies.

Generally, the cadets introduced issues related to values, the rules-based and values-based culture, leadership training and language as essential components of the RMC experience and as such, the focus groups data will provide valuable input to the questionnaire and interview instruments.

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## ANNEX A ANNOUNCEMENT TO RMC CADETS

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STUDENTS

YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO PARTICIPATE IN  
A FOCUS GROUP SESSION FOR A STUDY  
ON THE  
SOCIALIZATION OF OFFICER CADETS AT RMC

CONDUCTED BY

THE CANADIAN FORCES LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE (CFLI)  
THE SESSIONS WILL TAKE PLACE AT CDA HEADQUARTERS  
ROOMS 167 & 272 AS FOLLOWS:

Room 167: 1<sup>ST</sup> Year Students: May 2, 2005

10:45 – 11:45 OR 9:30 – 10:30 May 4

2<sup>ND</sup> Year Students: May 2, 2005

1:00 – 2:00 or 2:00 – 3:00

3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students: May 3, 2005

3:00 - 4:00

Room 272: 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Students: May 3, 2005

1:00 - 2:00

4<sup>th</sup> Year Students: May 3, 2005

2:00 - 3:00 or 3:00 - 4:00

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CALL

Dr. Phyllis Browne (541-6000) ex: 8779

Email: [phyllis.browne@rmc.ca](mailto:phyllis.browne@rmc.ca)

Dr. Daniel Lagace-Roy (541-6000) ex : 3858

Email: [daniel.lagace-roy@rmc.ca](mailto:daniel.lagace-roy@rmc.ca)

Mrs. Carol Jackson (541-6000) ex 6976

Email: [Jackson.CA@forces.gc.ca](mailto:Jackson.CA@forces.gc.ca)

THANKS FOR YOUR INTEREST AND PARTICIPATION

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## **ANNEX B: The Socialization of Cadets at RMC: Focus Groups Questions**

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### Focus Groups Sessions - Prompting Questions

The group will start with a broad statement and open-ended broad questions. Follow-up probes will be used to clarify things that are said, the facilitator may ask for an indication of consensus on some of the issues, and more specific questions will be used to target the factors previously identified. The groups will follow the same general format, but they will not be rigidly structured. Flexibility will be needed to explore the unique characteristics of each group. Thus, the questions that follow do not capture every possible avenue that the group may follow. As required, questions will be modified or dropped, and new ones added.

This study is concerned with finding out your reaction to a number of factors associated with your education and development as a potential military leader.

### Socialization

Socialization at RMC is generally a constructed and deliberate method of developing the individual according to specific requirements of the military. It is also a method of passing on traditions and beliefs to future generations through protocol, ceremony and pageantry.

Do you think you have the same opportunities for personal growth and development as your cohorts at civilian universities? Explain

Does the difference in socialization present any barriers/benefits?

How would you describe your experience at RMC?

Are there any changes in socialization that could be made to enhance your experience as an officer cadet?

### Social Change

Canada over the past fifty (50) or so years has transformed itself into a multicultural society by officially recognizing the various cultures of its population and extending the same basic rights to all citizens regardless of race, gender, religion, language or sexual orientation. The Canadian Forces and therefore RMC should reflect Canadian values and they should be central to its military ethos.

Have your values changed, or do you expect them to change, since arriving at RMC?

What do you like and/or dislike most about the RMC environment? Explain

Do you think that everyone at RMC should have the same opportunities? Explain

### Identity

The Royal Military College has been designed to train and develop officers for the Canadian military over a four-year period. During this time, those in training are referred to as officer cadets but may also in fact be perceived as junior professionals. All of whom fall into different levels of the structure based particularly on experience and year. They are also assigned to one of the three environmental services as an officer cadet. Overall, identity may take on various meanings and relationships and lead to the emergence of subcultures. Identity then, relates to how you identify yourself and how you think you are identified by the faculty and by your peers at RMC.

How do you presently identify yourself at RMC?

How do your peers at RMC identify you? Explain

How do you think you are identified at the college by faculty and the administration?

Do you feel that you are treated accordingly? Explain

### Diversity in the military

In Canada, individual rights and freedoms and social equality among citizens are embedded in the Canadian Human Rights Act of 1978, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms of 1982 and 1985, the Multiculturalism Act of 1982, and the Employment Equity Act of 1986. Therefore, any form of discrimination on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender or language (either of the two official languages) is legally forbidden.

Are there people from different backgrounds in your classes?

Do you think that this is representative of Canadian society?

Are people accepted as equals, regardless of their background?

Do you think that the curriculum at RMC provides the tools that you need to become culturally sensitive?

### Gender Integration

Full integration of women in the Canadian Forces came about in 2001 when barriers to submarine service were removed. Full integration means that Canadian women and men can serve in any function of the Canadian Forces.

Do you think that women and men should serve in any function of the military? Explain  
Do you believe that women are at a disadvantage because the military is a male culture? Explain

What are some of the challenges for female officer cadets?

Do you think that the opportunities for leadership roles are equal for males and females? Explain

#### Military Ethos and Professionalism

The Canadian military ethos is the genetic code of military professionalism in Canada. It is fully articulated in the Profession of Arms in Canada Manual and comprises three components: (1) beliefs and expectations about military service, (2) Canadian values and (3) core military values (duty, loyalty, integrity and courage).

How many of you have read the Profession of Arms Manual?

Canadian values are defined in the P of A Manual as: the democratic ideal, the concept of peace, order and good government, and the rule of law.

- Do you feel that Canadian values are incorporated in your education at RMC? Explain

How do these values relate to the values you uphold at RMC of truth, duty, and valor? Explain

Do you feel that the military ethos is gender neutral? Explain

#### Career Choice and Career Expectations

Career choice and career expectations are generally crafted by the individual. However, approximately 50% of RMC recruits are from military families and as such career choices may be made based on family interaction and military knowledge and may differ from those who come from non-military families.

What are your reasons for joining the Canadian military?

What are your personal career expectations?

Was the recruitment process informative enough in preparing you for the realities of RMC?

Have your expectations changed since enrolling at RMC?

What factors would influence you to leave the military?

## Leadership Training

As an officer cadet at RMC, your professional development is preparing you for a leadership role in the Canadian military. Leadership is broad-based and good leadership is critical to efficiency, effectiveness and overall success in military and non-military missions.

What do you think is an effective leader? Explain

Is your training providing the characteristics of an effective leader?

What would you like to see added to or dropped? Explain

Do you feel that there is sufficient opportunity for personal self-development? Explain

**Other.** We have talked about a range of factors around your experience at RMC. I have tried to identify the salient issues, but from your perspective, are there any factors of importance to you that I have not covered? Please think about this and identify any factors that may influence your experience at RMC positively or negatively, that I have missed. Give participants a few moments to think, then explore any new factors.

**Wrap-up.** Express thanks for their participation. Reinforce the confidentiality issue. Summarize briefly the major discussion points. Explain when the study will be completed and the availability of the results.



## **ANNEX C: INTRODUCTORY NARRATIVE**

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### Focus Group Introductory Format

Good Morning (afternoon), my name is Phyllis Browne. Many of you may not be fully aware of why you are here today, I hope to clarify this for you and then we can get started. I have passed around a letter that I will ask you to read and sign before we get started.

You should at least understand by now that this is a study that is being carried out by the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (CFLI) where I am a Research Officer. There are a number of factors in the education and leader development of officer cadets in which we are interested for this study. I will not tell you them all at this point as I would prefer to hear from you. The findings from this study will be used to make recommendations for preparing officer cadets for their leadership role in the new strategic environment in which post-Modern military missions are taking place. The study addresses issues of socialization of officer cadets at the Royal Military College (RMC). This is of particular importance given the increasing demands being placed on military leadership as a result of the increasing dependence on allied forces in military missions. Consequently, your participation is vital to the study as you are that future generation of Canadian military leadership that the study is designed to assist.

There are ground some rules that govern this focus group protocol. I will not make public any of the individual comments you make. But it is also expected that you will not go away from this discussion and refer to specific comments made by particular individuals. I simply ask that you show some respect for one another. You are requested not to engage in conversations with others on what took place in the focus groups in order to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of all participants.

The tape recorder is being used simply as a memory aid as it is difficult to remember all that is said in the number of focus groups that I am conducting without the aid of the tape recorder. But please rest assured that these tapes will not be made public and will be erased after the mandatory seven-year period has elapsed. However, if anyone has an objection to being taped, please let me know.

Finally, you should understand that your participation is voluntary. If you would rather not be part of this group, please let me know now. You are free to withdraw at any time, with no penalties or repercussions.

## ANNEX D: INFORMED CONSENT

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### To Focus Groups

This study is designed to explore and analyze the processes of socialization engaged in by the Royal Military College of Canada (RMC) in carrying out its mission of developing the future leadership of the Canadian Forces (CF). It is aimed at determining whether the current methods of socialization are congruent with the demands made of the Canadian military leadership as a component of increasingly dependent allied forces. The study will also examine whether the objectives of leader development at RMC are linked to the new roles and responsibilities of the military leader, functioning at the international level. The focus group exercises will be discussions on selected key issues including cultural change, diversity, gender integration, recruitment and retention, career choice and expectations, professional development, military ethos and professionalism.

The proposal for the study has been approved by the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute (CFLI) and the Research Ethics Board of the Royal Military College. The results will be compiled in a report that will offer recommendations to better prepare officer cadets for the increasingly demanding role of military leaders in the new strategic environment. Consequently, I am requesting your participation in one of the focus group exercises which should last approximately one (1) hour.

Please be aware that you are free to withdraw at any time with no penalties or repercussions.

Any questions regarding the ethics of this research can be directed to the Chair of the Research Ethics Board, Dr. S. Ranganathan (613-541-6000 x 6057, e-mail: [ranganathan-s@rmc.ca](mailto:ranganathan-s@rmc.ca)). You will be given a copy of this consent form.

You are required to respect the privacy of other participants by keeping their identities, and any information you hear in the focus group, confidential.


Please be assured that individual responses generated from your participation will **NOT** be made public. Confidentiality will be assured by producing only summaries of the information provided. A copy of the final report will be made available at the CFLI Library and on its website for anyone wishing to read it.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and by signing below, you are giving your consent to be included in the study. In any event, questions, concerns or complaints may be directed to Dr. Phyllis Browne (principal researcher), CFLI, at 613 541-6000 ex 8779, Karen Davis, Section Head, CFLI, ex 6978 or Colonel B. Horn, Director, CFLI ex 6977.

I have read and understand the above. I choose to participate in this study.

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Signature

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C

This is a report on the Focus Groups component of the research methodology designed to inform a study that will examine the socialization of Officer Cadets at The Royal Military College of Canada (RMC). Focus Groups sessions were designed to elicit responses to inform the development of a questionnaire and interview instrument for administration to representative samples of the cadet population. This technical memorandum documents the results and analysis of data generated from eight focus groups that took place in May 2005. The group participants were drawn from across the four-year spectrum of academic study to garner the cadets' perspectives on the issues surrounding their socialization at RMC and the extent to which it reflects social change in Canadian society. The sessions also addressed issues related to the influence of RMC in preparing future leaders of the CF to meet the changing demands imposed on military leaders as a result of the paradigm shift in military operations since the end of the Cold War. The analysis of focus groups data indicates that motivation, identity, socialization and social change are key areas for inclusion in the project questionnaire and interview protocol.

C

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Socialization  
Culture  
Ethnicity  
Values  
Leadership  
Diversity  
DiversityTraining  
Development



