

**DESIGN OF A 360° FEEDBACK INSTRUMENT
AS A LEADER DEVELOPMENT TOOL
IN THE CANADIAN FORCES**

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ABSTRACT

360° feedback programs have been shown to be effective means of developing leadership skills and influencing organizational culture, when employed in an environment that ensures the confidentiality of trained, informed raters, when supported by superiors, and when followed up by detailed debriefing and coaching of those leaders being rated.

While used effectively in a military environment, the uniqueness of the military culture, operational environment, and the unlimited liability of military members when faced with a mission preclude the use of “off-the-shelf” civilian instruments. In addition, unique sub-cultures within services, and units/regiments of the Canadian Forces (CF) suggest different constructs of leadership specific to each of these environments. Accordingly, leadership might be better measured within each of those environments with instruments tailor-made to those units and environments.

It was hypothesized that subordinates had a valuable contribution to make with respect to defining the leadership items within a survey instrument that best identified specific leadership competencies, as they are in a unique position of being able to observe and assess the long-term behavior and motivational effectiveness of leaders. A detailed examination of the organizational culture of the CF, the perception of CF leadership from a follower perspective, and a case study of the development process of two 360° feedback instruments used within the United States Army Special Operations Command, supported this hypothesis and suggested areas for further research.

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to the soldiers, sailors and airmen of the Canadian Forces, in the hope that the officer corps can provide them with the best leadership possible. They deserve nothing less.

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CHAPTER ONE - STUDY BACKGROUND

The Problem/Opportunity

Particularly in the military environment, subordinates and peers can be reluctant to give honest performance feedback. How then, can leaders get effective feedback about their performance from those peers and subordinates who are often most affected by their decisions and day-to-day performance? One method is through 360° feedback.

Used for years in the corporate world, 360° feedback has just recently begun to find its way into the military environment. Using a survey that rates performance against a series of core competencies, at the person being assessed (e.g. the leader) completes a survey, assessing their own performance. This is referred to as self-assessment, or self-rating. The leader's subordinates complete the same survey, offering feedback on the same competencies, referred to as bottom-up or subordinate rating. Similarly, peers offer peer rating, and superiors offer top-down, or supervisor rating. The leader's self-perception is then compared against that of their peers, their subordinates, and their superior. Armed with this new awareness of how their performance is perceived, and with an idea of their self-other agreement (the extent to which their self-assessment agrees with others' assessment of them), the leader can then choose how they might want to change or fine-tune their performance (e.g. behaviors, attitudes, skills) to achieve the best results. The problem this research project will address is how to design a 360° feedback instrument that can encourage the self-development of leaders in the Canadian Forces, and it will suggest a way ahead for the implementation of a 360° feedback program.

THE RESEARCH QUESTION

“So it is said that if you know others and know yourself, you will not be imperiled in a hundred battles” (Sun Tzu, trans. 1988, p. 82)

This thesis examines the following research question:

Reflecting on the American experience of designing the US Ranger’s 360° feedback instrument *The Leaders Edge*, how can an effective 360° feedback instrument be designed for leader development in the Canadian Forces?

In order to answer this, several sub-questions will need to be answered:

- a. What is 360° feedback and what are the requirements for success?
- b. How can we meet these requirements in the Canadian Forces and what cultural factors need to be addressed in doing so?
- c. What 360° design process will meet these needs?

In many organizations, including the Canadian Forces (CF), the only feedback usually received about a member’s performance comes from a single source: their supervisor. While often providing valuable assessment of past performance, most would acknowledge that their superior writing their evaluation likely has a different perspective of their day-to-day performance than their subordinates and peers. 360° feedback is a tool used to provide leaders with information on how their perception of themselves and their own performance compares with that of their subordinates, peers, and superiors. Armed with this information, the leader can then take steps to improve areas of perceived weakness, and take full advantage of their leadership strengths. The conditions and culture found within the Canadian Forces, however, are radically different to those found in the corporate world, where 360° feedback has already begun to gain widespread acceptance. William M. Mercer consulting firm found in 2000, 65% of American companies employed it (as cited in Pfau, Kay, Nowack & Ghorpade, 2002). Off-the-

shelf 360° instruments, however, are not likely to meet the needs of the unique leadership requirements and operational situations found within the Canadian Forces.

The Organization

The Canadian Forces document *Officership 2020* (Department of National Defence [DND], 2001) outlines the way ahead for officer professional development, covering both the officer corps and the Officer Professional Development (OPD) system. It clearly establishes the requirement to “recognize, reinforce and practice mentorship and feedback as a component of leadership” and to “develop strong communication skills for genuine two-way communication to encourage leaders to solicit and listen to the ideas and input of their subordinates” (p. I-27). It also sets a formal Strategic Objective to “Create the policies and conditions that will help the CF become a true learning organization”. It then defines a learning organization as one that “systematically seeks feedback for quality of leadership, seeks feedback to ensure quality and integrity of policy advice to decision maker, seeks to establish wellness and balance in the organization, and provides opportunities for feedback” (p. I-31). Finally, it states that “to realize the vision of the Officer Corps of 2020, the General/Flag Officer Corps must... build the constituencies necessary to ensure commitment... Commentary, criticism must be encouraged and actively sought, both internally and externally” (p. I-37). While clearly identifying the requirement for and benefits of meaningful feedback, this document does not lay out any specific means for encouraging, soliciting, or collecting it. The Canadian Forces needs a new mechanism for soliciting multi-rater feedback, hence the underlying opportunity presented by this research.

What Are We Pretending Not to Know?

In the Canadian Forces, there already exists the basic realization that feedback is an important factor in effective leadership. In particular, the important role of Senior Non-Commissioned Officers (Snr NCOs) in providing feedback to officers has already been established. The policy document *Canada's Army* (DND, 1998) states that senior NCOs play an important role in the development of officers by “offering advice, helping solve problems, and providing feedback and information” (p. 52). A recent study of Canadian Forces (CF) and Department of National Defence (DND) employees examined, in part, work environment, and work attitudes and outcomes. It found that only “half of those in the CF perceive their officer to behave in a supportive fashion” (Duxbury & Higgins, 2001, p. 12). Officers need to be given “incentives to focus on the ‘people part’ of their jobs... [including] 360 feedback” (p. 13). So it is clear that while recognizing the importance of feedback, and having acknowledged 360° feedback specifically, no systemic steps have been taken to integrate it into the Professional Development (PD) systemⁱ.

More experience exists in the US military with 360° feedback instruments. One model, *The Leader's Edge*, was developed for the US 75th Ranger Regiment and has met with enthusiastic success and popular “buy-in” within their organization (personal correspondence with LTC M Banks and Kristin Richmond, November 11, 2003). A second instrument, currently under development for use within the another elite branch of the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC), mirrors the development process of *The Leader's Edge*. This research will address what process of participation and design resulted in the success of *The Leader's Edge* and continues to inform the other USASOC instrument design, and how those factors may apply to the design of unique Canadian instruments.

Building on a new understanding of the requirements of designing an effective 360° feedback instrument, we could then proceed with its introduction to the CF. We can provide leaders with the feedback referred to in *Officership 2020*, help to establish the CF as a Learning Organization, and help the officer corps improve its performance to the point where we do not find half its members feeling a lack of support from their officers.

360° feedback can indicate, from the perspective of our led, to what extent our leadership lives up to the military ethos and leadership principles. The Report of the Somalia Commission found that:

In light of the Somalia experience, it may not prove sufficient simply to articulate an ethos and exhort soldiers to follow it. It would seem that a more fundamental need exists for a confirmatory and probative exercise to demonstrate that all soldiers, but particularly the senior officers, live by the military ethos and personify its core values. The military, led by its senior officers, needs to reclaim the ethical high ground. (DND, 1997, Executive Summary, *The Military in Canadian Society*, para. 6)

A 360° feedback program, carefully, thoughtfully, respectfully and systemically applied, can provide us with part of the “confirmatory and probative exercise” that will allow us to develop in our leaders the essential qualities required to provide effective, ethical, responsible leadership. The first step is to determine what process is required to design an effective instrument.

CHAPTER TWO – INFORMATION REVIEW

Introduction

The areas explored in support of the research question are:

Area I. 360° feedback and positive change in leader behavior,

Area II. Applicability of 360 ° feedback in a military environment, and

Area III. Cultural factors relating to 360° feedback in the Canadian Forces.

These domains of the literature are inter-related in the following way:

- Area I, through an examination of the literature, defines 360° feedback, explains its application in general terms, and establishes it as an effective leader development instrument in the general civilian context.
- Area II builds on this knowledge, and shows that 360° feedback has been successful in the military environment, with reference mainly to American military examples.
- Area III examines cultural and organizational factors that may be currently contributing to inadequate feedback, and possible obstacles to the implementation of a 360° feedback program in the CF.

An exploration of these domains informs the research question and builds supportive evidence for the recommendations that follow the research.

I. 360° feedback and positive change in leader behavior

360° feedback is an instrument for leadership development as evidenced in numerous literature sources (Garavan, Morley & Flynn, 1997; Smither & Walker, 2001; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998). In addressing this topic, it would be useful to examine what 360° feedback is, how it works, and that it does indeed work in various contexts, prior to attempting to specifically apply

it to a military environment which this research is attempting to assess and support.

The key sub-topics addressed in this area of the literature review are:

- What is 360° Feedback?
- How does it work?
- How does it alter leader behaviors?
- What are some of its disadvantages and how are these minimized?

Definition.

A review of pertinent literature finds general agreement on the definition of 360° feedback. Differences occur mainly in terminology, rather than substance. Brown and Cole (1998), refer to it as “Multi-rater feedback”, and define it as “a process in which individuals receive feedback from others—typically managers, peers, subordinates, and sometimes customers—whose good working relationships are key to the individual’s effectiveness.”

Garavan, Morley and Flynn (1997), call it “360 degree feedback”, defining it as “a contrived method of providing a flow of feedback to employees from all directions” (p. 134), based on the belief that:

Subordinates are well positioned to view and evaluate leadership behaviors – they may have more complete and accurate information about many leadership behaviors than supervisors have. Van Velsor et al. argue that 360 degree feedback gives managers the opportunity to rate themselves in a variety of performance domains and, through feedback, to see how their self-assessment compares to the assessment of others... and, according to London et al., peers who interact frequently with the employee probably would be able to provide meaningful feedback. (p. 135)

Dalessio defines multisource, or 360° feedback as “evaluations gathered about a focal participant from two or more rating sources which can include the self, supervisor, peers, direct reports, internal customers, external customers, and vendors/suppliers.” (cited in Smither, London and Richmond, 2002, p.3)

Collating these sources, we can establish our own concept of 360° feedback for the purposes of this research as follows:

360° feedback, also known as multisource, multi-rater, full-circle or co-worker feedback, obtains information regarding an individual’s performance from any combination of self, subordinates, peers, supervisors, and customers, and presents it as a more comprehensive perspective of a person’s work performance.

How does it work?

360° feedback, also known as multi-rater, multi-source feedback, is a very powerful and sensitive process. It can increase the individual’s awareness of how their colleagues view their performance and indeed how it compares with their own view of their performance. It can serve as a strong spur for development and behavior change. (Gray et al., 2001, p. 4).

Practically speaking, the process of using a 360° feedback tool begins with the education of participants about the process, its strengths, weaknesses, and desired outcomes. This is followed by the selection of participants, distribution and completion of the 360° feedback instrument, the processing of the information, and the production of a report that presents the views of the leader (person doing the self-assessment), subordinates, peers and the

supervisor/superior officer. Finally, the leader receives a debrief following his/her initial observations of the 360° feedback received and is counseled on how to best use the information made available to develop a personal development action plan. There may also be periodic follow-up counseling sessions to review progress made and help refine the leader's course of action. In fact, Goldsmith and Underhill (2001) found it to be imperative:

We have found that using an “executive owned” leadership profile, engaging executives in the *process* (rather than creating a one-time event), encouraging follow-up, and providing ongoing coaching are the most critical variables in successfully using MSF [Multisource Feedback] as an executive development tool (p. 275).

How does it alter leader's behavior?

The benefits of multi-rater feedback (from numerous people such as subordinates and peers) over single rater feedback (from only one source, usually one's supervisor) have been clearly established. Research by Feenor and Prince (cited in Galloucis, 2001) indicates that 360° feedback, when compared to top-down single source feedback, offers new and wider perspectives by which a leader's skills, abilities or performance can be judged. It alleviates some recognized deficiencies of top-down assessments, provides the unique opportunity for individuals to rate themselves, and can be used to reinforce the values and vision of the organization. Bias and discrimination may also be reduced because more people share the responsibility for feedback (Vinson, 1996).

Bunker, Cram and Ting (2002) suggest that particularly young leaders often may “thrive on change and demonstrate excellent coping and survival skills but ... lack the self-awareness, empathy, and social abilities required to foster and nurture those strengths in others” (p. 87). They claim that the weakness of these forceful, talented young leaders is often “a lack of

emotional maturity” (p. 82). They advocate the use of 360° feedback as a way to improve awareness:

It’s worth noting that many of these smart young managers aren’t used to hearing criticism. Consequently, they may discount (single rater) negative feedback, either because the comments don’t mesh with what they’ve heard in previous conversations or because their egos are so strong. Or they may conclude that they can “fix” the problem right away- after all, they’ve been able to fix most problems they’ve encountered in the past.... And that’s why 360-degree feedback is so valuable: When it comes from multiple sources and is ongoing, it’s difficult to ignore (p. 83).

Using similar language, Daniel Goleman talks of “emotional intelligence” and “self-directed learning” as keys to effective leadership (Goleman, Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). He states that to complete the discovery that leads to self-directed learning, “you need to develop an understanding of your leadership strengths and gaps – the differences or similarities between the ideal and the real.... The 360-degree view offers that fuller picture” (pp. 134-135).

360° Feedback and Human Behavioral Models

The theory of 360° feedback can be related to several widely accepted models of human interaction and communication. Specifically, the concepts of Intent Versus Effect, espoused theory/theory-in-use, and the Johari window, are reflected in 360° feedback applications.

The phrase “intent versus effect” or “intent versus outcome”, relates to circumstances in which a person does or says one thing, expecting a certain result, yet achieves another. Morrison (2001), describes the relationship between “intent versus effect” and feedback, stating,

“Feedback is information about how a person did, in light of what he/she attempted: that is, it captures intent versus effect, or ideal versus actual performance” (p. 301). Congruency between what a leader intends, and what others perceive as the effect, are indicative of effective decisions. When leaders receive honest feedback on the actual results of their decisions, actions or statements, they are more apt to lead effectively. Gerras (2002) gives a military example of this concept at work, related to Argyris’s “left-hand column technique”, designed to align what is thought, in an interaction between two or more people, and what is actually expressed:

For instance, if the brigade commander asks a battalion commander what he thinks about the brigade commander’s “great idea” to do an 8 mile run in complete chemical protective gear with gas mask and boots, and the battalion commander responds, “Hooah sir,” the “Hooah sir” goes in the right-hand column. If, however, the battalion commander was thinking to himself, “this run will destroy the already weak cohesion throughout the brigade,” this would go in the left-hand column. The clear, and yet common, disparity between the two columns will lead to a poor decision and action. In terms of dialogue, the lack of complete candidness will cause the group to go down a road that most members of the group think is the wrong way, but are afraid to say it (p.8).

This example illustrates both a divergent “intent versus effect” of the brigade commander’s idea, and a lack of awareness, fueled by the reluctance of his subordinates to give valuable, albeit contradictory, feedback. In order to minimize the difference between your intent and effect, Weiss (1997) advises leaders to “Recognize the truism that what you intend and how other people react to what you say or do may differ. Perception is reality. Become aware of how other people hear or see you” (p. 4)

A related concept is Argyris’s “espoused theory” versus “theory-of-use”. It can be described

as incongruence between how someone thinks they act based on their espoused theories and beliefs, compared to how they actually act, based on their actual or sub-conscious theories and beliefs.

When you observe people’s behavior and try to come up with rules that would make sense of it, you discover a very different theory of action—what I call the individual’s “theory-in-use.” Put simply, people consistently act inconsistently, unaware of the contradiction between their espoused theory and their theory-in-use, between the way they think they are acting and the way they really act (Argyris, 1991, p. 103).

As an awareness-enhancing and a trust-building tool, 360° feedback can help align intent with effect, and espoused theory with theory-in-use.

The final related model of human interaction is the Johari Window, developed by Joseph Luft and Harrington Ingham (Luft, 1969, p. 6). It describes four quadrants of awareness that exist when an individual interacts with others.

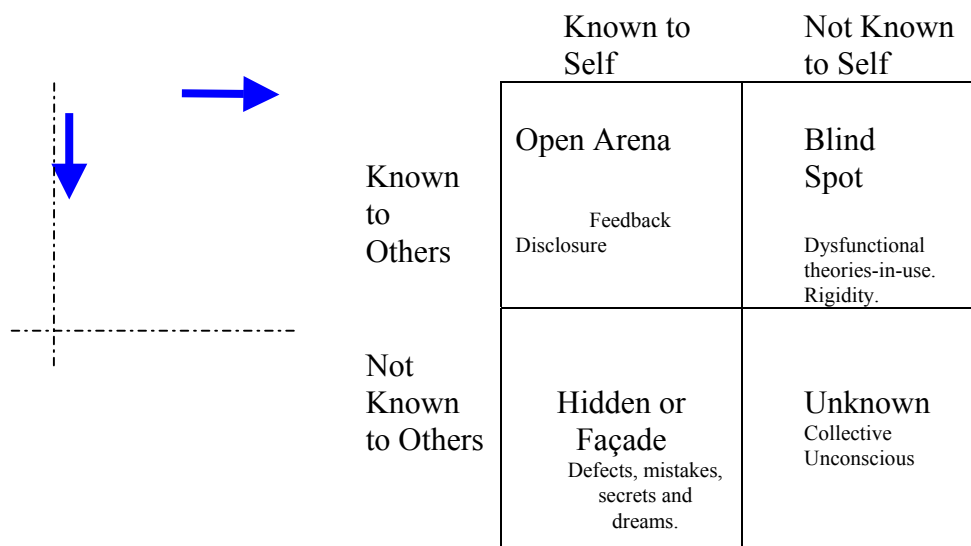


Figure 1. The Johari Window. Adapted from Marsick & Watkins (1990).

The four quadrants can be described as follows:

- Open Arena: contains information known to both self and others. Characterized by the free exchange of information and ideas, it expands as the level of trust and open feedback increases, as illustrated by the arrows.
- Blind Spot: information that is known to others, but not to you. This can lead to decisions being made based on incomplete or inaccurate information.
- Hidden/Façade: Information known to you but not others can lead to misunderstanding of your true intent. This involves the deliberate withholding of information, or the projection of false or misleading information.
- Unknown: Information that remains unknown to both you and those with whom you interact.

The boundaries between the quadrants are not static, but move as information is shared between parties. Feedback from others to self will result in an increase to the Open Arena, and a corresponding decrease in the Blind Spot. Similarly, information disclosure by self to others reduces the size of the Hidden/Façade quadrant. The Open Arena contains the best conditions for decision-making and learning, and should therefore be as large as possible.

A large blind spot might indicate a lack of awareness of the contradiction that Argyris writes of, between one's espoused theory and their theory-in-use, as well as the inconsistency between intent and effect referred to by Weiss (1997), and Morrison (2001). 360 feedback reduces the blind spot (Goleman, 2000, p.88; Wimer & Nowack, 1998, p. 80), brings awareness of inconsistencies between espoused theories and theories-in-use (Senge, 1990, p. 202)ⁱⁱ, and aligns intent and effect (Morrison, 2001, p. 301).

In summary, 360° feedback is a valuable and effective leadership development tool. If our definition of leadership includes the ability to motivate subordinates, then it follows that a

critical measure of leadership effectiveness is the perception of those followers. As Alimo-Metcalf (1998) writes, “If one is attempting to measure a manager’s effectiveness in motivating his/her staff, then soliciting staffs’ views through a 360 degree feedback process is not only obvious, it is an imperative” (p. 36).

Disadvantages and how they are minimized.

360 Feedback is not without its challenges. In an examination of some of the cautions around 360° feedback, Pfau, Kay, Nowack and Ghorpade (2002) point out that for many, giving effective appraisals is difficult and can lead to conflict and uncertainty. They suggest minimizing this by training all involved in the multi-rater 360° feedback process. “Providing constructive feedback takes instruction, training and practice” (p. 58). They also state that participants, when left with only the uninterpreted results of a survey, often “fail to follow up after feedback” (p. 57). This can be countered by creating a personal “action plan” for the leader to follow in order to better meet his/her personal goals and by association and context those of the organization. Mary Vinson (1996) writes, “Follow-up is an essential part of the process. Employees should develop action plans on low-scoring areas ... and assess their improvement in follow-up surveys about six months later” (p. 12).

Obtaining truthful feedback from respondents may be difficult. “Its difficult to own up to negative feelings on paper, so you might equivocate. Or, you might vent” (Vinson, 1996, p. 12). In order to increase the chances of receiving honest feedback, Vinson advocates complete anonymity and confidentiality. This helps convince people they can be candid. In addition, she states, “360-degree feedback shouldn’t be used to determine salaries or promotions. The aim is to open up a dialogue” (p.12).

Despite some dangers associated with 360° feedback, the literature makes clear that when introduced along with training and education, implemented in a confidential, anonymous manner, and when followed up in a systematic, integrated way, it can be a powerful tool for developing the leadership skills and behaviors of the participants.

The literature examined supports the validity of 360° feedback as a strong instrument for leader development in general. If it can be further demonstrated that this type of instrument has military applications, we can build a case for its application in the CF.

II. Applicability of 360° feedback in a military environment?

Having demonstrated through an examination of the literature the validity of 360° feedback in theory and practice in the civilian context, it remains to prove its validity in the general military context. This section lays the groundwork for the “leap” required from 360° feedback as a civilian leadership development tool, to 360° feedback as a military leadership development tool. Examples of foreign (mostly American) military research, experience, and success with 360° Feedback instruments show that this method can in fact be an effective tool in the military.

The key sub-topics addressed in this area of the literature review are:

- Foreign military 360° Feedback experiences
- Canadian military 360° Feedback experiences

Foreign Military Experiences

Lieutenant-General Walter F. Ulmer (1998), former commanding general of III Corp, US Army, and now a Distinguished Fellow of the US Army War College, had this to say on the role of 360° feedback:

Peer and subordinate evaluations have been used by commanders especially interested in leader development in some Army schools, in selected pre-commissioning programs, in some special training situations, and in a few units.... Only the led know for certain the leader's moral courage, consideration for others, and commitment to unit above self. This is the indisputably crucial element in leader assessment and development systems. If in fact we prize these values and want to ensure that we promote those who have routinely demonstrated them, some form of input from subordinates is required. Again, the concept and technology are available to handle such inputs without organizationally dysfunctional side effects. (para. 40)

Extensive research into the military application of 360° feedback as a leadership development tool has been conducted in the United States. Army, Navy (including the Marine Corps), and Air Force studies and trials have produced very positive results.

In 1998 the United States Army Research Institute (ARI) commissioned Bruce Avolio and a colleague to conduct a study of platoon readiness as a function of a “full range of leadership” (Avolio, 2001, p. 1). Using Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (MLQ) and Team Multifactor Leadership Questionnaires (TMLQ), both multi rater leadership feedback tools, they collected data from 90 light infantry platoons in garrison at their home bases, one month prior to their deployment to the Joint Readiness Training Center (JRTC)ⁱⁱⁱ. Those platoons who functioned most effectively in the field at JRTC had platoon leaders who were rated by their platoon members as being more inspiring, showing more individualized consideration for

developing soldiers, set clear performance expectations in garrison, and they considered what other platoon members had to say, incorporating good ideas. Those leaders who were assessed as good in garrison performed well at JRTC (Avolio, 2001). The findings of this study indicate that 360° feedback, in the form of the MLQ, is a good indicator of leader effectiveness in the field. Similarly, the TMLQ results were good indicators of the team effectiveness in the field.

A recent study for the United States Air Force (Halverson, Tonidandel, Barlow & Dipboye, 2002) investigated the relationship between promotion rates and self-supervisor, self-peer, and self-subordinate agreement on a leadership scale. It found that self-subordinate agreement was a better predictor of promotion rate than self-superior or self-peer agreement. Their findings seem to indicate that the “followers’ perspectives are necessary in order to evaluate leadership ability” (p.12) and that particularly in a military setting, “a leader’s self-awareness of his/her subordinates’ perceptions of him/her should be especially important to leadership effectiveness....” (p. 12).

The US Navy currently has two 360° feedback pilot programs proposed. Pilot A will “give leaders, at every level, constructive feedback on desired leadership competencies” (Center for Executive Education (CEE), 2002, para. 1). Seen as a development instrument, vice administrative, its aim is to provide flexibility to tailor to the needs of each command. Pilot B’s purpose is to improve upon the promotion selection process through the use of 360° surveys, and develop the tool for use within the evaluation cycle (para. 2).

Within the US Army, at least two multi-rater tools are currently available to leaders as an aid for feedback and development. The Leader Azimuth Check developed by the US Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences is a 360° feedback questionnaire that rates a leader’s performance against nine leadership competencies, and provides the subject with

useful feedback concerning their relative strengths and weaknesses. It provides a foundation for their personal leadership self-development plan (Army Research Institute, n.d.). A study investigating leader reaction to the Leader Azimuth Check after the test group of leaders at Fort Clayton, Panama had received their feedback indicated, “Subordinates were overwhelmingly viewed as the most valuable source of feedback. Eighty three percent reported that they would use their feedback to monitor and develop their leadership” (Karrasch & Halpin, 1999, abstract).

The Command Climate Survey is used in the U.S. Army by newly appointed commanders to review the climate of their unit, looking at factors such as leadership, cohesion, morale and the human relations environment, that have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the unit (Army Research Institute, 1998). By distributing the survey to the unit’s soldiers and ensuring conditions exist to allow for anonymous responses, commanders get an accurate assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of their unit, a picture of its morale, quality of its collective leadership, and the subordinates’ assessment of the unit’s readiness. Information as to the extent to which the unit is free of harassment, discrimination, and racial prejudice is also solicited. While different from other 360° surveys discussed herein in that it deals with the unit climate as opposed to the individual leader’s performance, it is nonetheless a valuable multi rater tool, providing useful information to the commander, and thus facilitating the improvement of unit effectiveness (Army Research Institute, 1998).

The Ministry of Defence (MOD) in the United Kingdom has employed 360° feedback for the purpose of personal development within two programs. These programs are the Defence Leadership Centre’s (DLC) Defence Strategic Leadership Programme (80 one star participants per year) and the MOD Higher Management training programme run at Ashridge Management College (a total of approximately 250 military (Lt Col - Col) and Grade B and Senior Civil

Servant (SCS) participants per year). Participants in both programmes report the experience as beneficial (personal correspondence, Cdr P. Crago (Royal Navy), 28 April 2003).

It has been shown that 360° feedback is effective in providing accurate information to a leader about their strengths and weaknesses, facilitates leadership self-development, and that it can reflect leadership performance and potential more accurately than top-down feedback. In addition, experience in the United States and United Kingdom militaries indicates it shows great promise in a military context. But is it required and would it be effective in the Canadian Forces?

Canadian 360° Feedback Experiences

There have been some instances of civilian contractors being engaged to conduct limited leadership self-assessments using 360° feedback type tools for workshops and seminars involving DND and CF personnel. For example, Canadian Forces Medical Group (CFMG) has contracted CLS West consultants to provide “numerous standardized tests and commercial instruments ...administered over the last 4 years, each focusing on different areas of leadership, management, culture, team performance, leadership impact, strategy and attitude” (personal correspondence, Phil Cady, President CLS West, 17 October 2003). These were administered during their annual commander’s retreat to “CFMG HQ staff and COs, RSMs, specialist Medical Officers, Dentists, clinic managers, [and] Reserve COs, all from the CFMG organization” (personal correspondence, Maj D. Farris, EA Comd CFMG, 16 October 2003). For the most part, these local initiatives have involved the use of civilian, off-the-shelf instruments that, while valuable, may not capture the essence of leadership specific to the military context. Their use tends to depend more on the personal influence of leaders within the organizations involved, and are not integrated into the professional development system of the CF.

Dr Franklin Pinch, senior research fellow at the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, has conducted the most continuous application of militarized 360° tools integrated into formal military training. Since 1998, Dr. Pinch has administered both the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and the Strategic Leader Development Inventory (SLDI), to candidates on the Advanced Military Studies Course (AMSC) and National Security Studies Course (NSSC), Canadian Forces College, Toronto. He also employs the Myers Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), used to identify personality preference profiles, which may be integrated with MLQ and SLDI results. The MLQ used by Dr Pinch was developed by Bernard Bass and Bruce Avolio, and is of the same type used by Avolio with the light infantry platoons of the US Army prior to their deployment to the JRTC, cited earlier in this paper. The SLDI was researched and designed by T.O. Jacobs and E. Jaques, and is used by the Industrial College of the Armed Forces (USA). It has been adapted for Canadian use. (F. Pinch, personal communication, October 30, 2002).

The Canadian Forces Command and Staff College in Kingston, Ontario is beginning to investigate the possibility of incorporating a 360° type tool, in cooperation with a couple of other Canadian agencies which have experience developing and using similar tools in organizations such as the RCMP (F. Pinch, personal communication, October 30, 2002).

The Canadian Army has also made forays into the use of 360 ° feedback instruments at the unit level, albeit not in the area of leader development, with two multi-rater instruments. Between 1999 and 2001, over 2000 Canadian soldiers serving in Bosnia were administered the Unit Climate Profile (UCP). Similar to the American *Command Climate Profile* discussed earlier, the UCP is designed to provide commanding officers with "... a detailed snapshot of soldiers' morale, confidence in leadership, their sense of social cohesion, as well as their sense of

their ability to complete tasks and missions, or ‘task cohesion’” (Mooney, 2003, p. 12). It is administered while on operations in war-like environments, in order to provide a unit commanding officer with “a true picture of morale and cohesion within his sub-units, [and this] gives them real data to look at - accurate information about confidence in leadership and other factors can become a prescription for fixing problems in a unit” (Maj Kelly Farley, cited in Mooney, 2003, p. 12).

The second instrument is the Unit Morale Profile (UMP) and has been administered to 5 Anglophone and 3 Francophone units of the Canadian Army since mid-2001 by Director Human Resources Research and Evaluation (DHRRE) at National Defence Headquarters (Maj B.F. Johnston, personal communication, September 5, 2003). The UMP is administered to Army units in garrison to measure different aspects of the environment within the unit (Ahronson & Eberman, 2002, pp. 6-7). Major Riley, formerly of DHRRE describes it as follows: “The UMP is primarily designed as a diagnostic instrument allowing the Command structure an insight into the strengths and limitations of the unit through the opinions, perceptions and beliefs of unit members” (Riley, n.d., p. 4). Commanding Officers can then take advantage of unit strengths and address areas of concern accordingly. Riley describes the UMP as “a diagnostic tool to assist the command structure” (p. 5). It is designed to provide the commander with an awareness of the climate of the unit rather than an awareness of his or her leadership behaviors or effectiveness directly. (Maj B.F. Johnston, personal communication, September 5, 2003).

A similar survey designed for the navy was called the Ship’s Effectiveness Profile (SEP). Due to conflicting operational requirements the Navy canceled its introduction, but is again looking at measuring organizational climate in its units with an instrument such as the UMP. DHRRE is currently redesigning the UMP so that it will be equally applicable to the needs of air,

land and maritime environments and defence civilians within integrated units within NDHQ (Maj B.F. Johnston, personal communication, September 5, 2003).

The UCP uses multi-source feedback to provide commanders with a better awareness of their unit conditions, but not of their own leadership behaviors. The UMP examines the environment and conditions within the unit using multi-source feedback, but again, is not designed to provide feedback on the leader's attributes directly. Both address the attributes of the unit, or team, rather than the leader. Once again it seems that, having endorsed the value of 360° feedback, the Canadian Forces has yet to apply it to leader development in a long-term, comprehensive way. There is acceptance of the use of 360° feedback with Colonels and Generals on the Advanced Military Studies Course (AMSC) and National Security Studies Course (NSSC), Canadian Forces College, Toronto. The instrument is being trialed with Majors and Lieutenant-Colonels at the Command and Staff College. What is lacking in the CF is a coordinated, systemic and progressive 360° feedback process that includes its application at the junior officer level, when leadership behaviors under real-life operational conditions are first modeled and developed.

III. Cultural and Organizational Factors of the CF.

Major General Keith Penney, on the occasion of his retirement as Chief of Review Services of the Canadian Forces, stated:

Existing culture can actually kill a good idea before it gets a chance to germinate or take hold. They always say that if you don't know history, you're doomed to repeat it. I say, if you don't understand your culture, then any change initiative is doomed to fail (Penney, 2003, p. 6).

It is therefore necessary to briefly examine the existing cultural climate in the Canadian Forces, not only to demonstrate why 360 ° feedback might be required, but also to consider what cultural factors and organizational characteristics must be addressed to allow for its successful design and implementation. For the purposes of this discussion, we will consider CF organizational culture to include those aspects of both climate and culture, as defined by Bradley, Johnston, Charbonneau & Campbell (2002):

The literature suggests that organizational culture and organizational climate are separate but related constructs. Organizational climate is accepted to be a temporary condition comprised of objective or perceived environmental issues that can be measured quantitatively, manipulated and changed relatively easily; whereas, organizational culture is thought to be the set of values, beliefs and assumptions held in common by members of the organization and necessary for internal integration and adaptation to external forces. Compared to climate, culture is more complex, difficult to assess and resistant to change (p. 4).

This section reviews pertinent literature relating to the following areas:

- The Relationship Between Organizational Culture and 360° Feedback
 - 360° feedback effectiveness depends on Organizational Culture;
 - Organizational culture can be changed by 360° feedback;
- The general culture of the Canadian Forces:
 - How others have defined CF culture;
 - Anti-academic and counter-innovation as characteristics of the CF;
 - Current perception of Leadership from within the CF;
 - Cultural and demographic change in the CF

- The impact of the “Learning Organization” concept on the CF; and
- How these factors affect 360 ° feedback, and how 360° feedback might address these factors.

The Relationship Between Organizational Culture and 360° Feedback

A review of the related literature shows that the relationship between 360° feedback and Organizational Culture is twofold. First, the impact and effectiveness of a 360° feedback program is dependant to a large extent on the organizational climate and culture. Factors such as trust, teamwork, hierarchical structure, openness to innovation, and loyalty will affect how 360° feedback is accepted. Second, organizational culture can be affected by an effective 360° feedback program. In fact, there is a growing trend towards the use of 360° feedback as an instrument of cultural change.

360° Feedback Effectiveness Depends on Organizational Culture

A significant body of research shows that organizational culture is a key consideration when deciding whether and how to introduce 360° feedback. The level of trust, historical hierarchical structure, traditional acceptance of innovation and the attitudes of leaders towards subordinates all have an impact on how and if 360° instruments will be accepted. Alimo-Metcalf (1998) tells us “The best organizational culture to support and benefit from it [360 degree feedback] is that of the ‘learning organization’. Bear the principles and philosophy in mind at all times” (p. 43). We have seen previously in this paper that the CF is striving to become a Learning Organization (DND, 2001), and the extent to which it has been successful will be discussed in more depth later.

The role of authority, and previous styles of leadership experienced within the organization have an impact on the ease with which 360° feedback might be introduced. Generally speaking, the more hierarchical and authority-based the organization, the longer it takes to gain acceptance.

For example, if an organization has historically embraced an authorization, command and control leadership philosophy, attempts to gain improved interpersonal skills might not receive encouragement and support long enough for an individual to cycle through the stages of change—particularly through action and maintenance. The time required for individual and organization change—usually years—is often underestimated. (Brown & Cole, 1998, *Culture and Change*, para. 1)

This might have an impact on the way 360° feedback is introduced to the CF, on informing realistic expectations of short-term results, and on the extent of follow-up counseling required for participating leaders.

The culture of an organisation needs to be considered prior to the introduction of the 360 degree feedback process. It is more likely to be easily introduced where openness, mutual trust and honesty are part of the organisational culture and there is a genuine interest in and desire for performance improvement. (Gray et al, n.d., p. 6).

So we see that culture affects the acceptance of 360° feedback, and its ability to encourage not only leader behavior (individual change), but organizational change (cultural change) as well. If, however, this organizational/cultural change is consistent with a desired change in the CF—for example, a change towards becoming a ‘Learning Organization’—then perhaps 360° feedback can be an important part of that process.

Organizational culture can be changed by 360° feedback

An examination of 360° feedback in terms of both organizational and individual change is not new. Garavan, Morley & Flynn wrote, “The use of 360 degree feedback can be examined from two perspectives – the organizational and the individual perspective” (1997, p. 136). From an organizational perspective, they advocate the use of 360° feedback “to facilitate cultural change such as to accelerate a shift to team work and employee empowerment” (p.136), and “to reinforce the organization’s desired core values and business strategies, and to provide feedback on how well managers are perceived to adhere to such core values” (p. 136). They describe the benefits to the organization as follows:

- It enhances two-way communication and increases the opportunity for employee involvement.
- It can demonstrate respect for employees by showing them that their opinions count. The organization is asking for their perspective on the behavior of their manager.
- It can help to create better working relationships within the organization. O’Reilly[11], for example, found that the feedback improves the ability of people to work in teams (p. 140).

When a 360° feedback instrument is designed around cultural attributes (such as those found in a learning organization), it can lead to an increase in awareness of those attributes. Tonrow and Tonrow (2001) write, “MSF can be used as a strategic vehicle to communicate a new direction for the organization” (p. 52). The 360° instrument can present new cultural attributes in a “common language that lets people assess whether they ‘walk the talk’ and serves to facilitate organizational alignment and culture building” (p.52).

The Culture of the Canadian Forces

How Others Have Defined CF Culture

Caution must be applied when attempting to define the culture of the Canadian Forces, as it consists not of one homogeneous culture, but a collection of varied traditions, histories, loyalties and leadership models and philosophies. Despite the CF being legally a unified service, distinct Air Force, Army and Navy cultures exist, and these cultures shape the leadership styles to be found therein. English (2002) writes, “Each service has a unique culture that influences acceptable leadership styles in that service” (p. 3). He notes that this unique culture shapes the leaders who mature and develop within each service, so that “Even in the unified CF.... leaders spend their most formative years in a single service culture that shapes their views about what is an appropriate leadership style” (p. 38). He also examines the different hierarchies of loyalty found in the Navy, Air Force and Army, concluding that there are different hierarchies between the services. Not only that, but he notes different hierarchies within different branches of each service. For example, he found that within the Army, the Artillery loyalty hierarchy tends to be to 1) job/branch (infantry, artillery, etc.), 2) service (Army, Navy or Air Force), 3) unit. Within the Infantry, however, the hierarchy is to 1) regiment/unit 2) job/branch, then 3) the Army as a service (p. 32). This indicates a different culture exists not only between environmental services, but between branches of those services as well, and this might well result in different expectations of what constitutes effective leadership attributes. The appropriateness of “one-size-fits-all” leader development programs might therefore be questioned. Notwithstanding this caution, there are still some common characteristics that tend to define the culture within the CF.

Robertson (2000) explores the nature of military organizations and their tendency to focus on short-term goals, rather than long-term strategies, explaining, “it is hard for armed

services to consider long-term future requirements removed from the press of day-to-day matters” (p. 64). He argues that this leads to a predisposition against innovation and experimentation. “For instance, experimentation depends on a spirit of inquiry that in some ways runs counter to the military culture” (p. 65). He goes on to identify key differences between what he describes as the Scientific Culture, and the Military Culture:

The Scientific and Military Cultures	
<i>Scientific Culture</i>	<i>Military Culture</i>
driven by discovery	driven by knowledge
non-hierarchical	hierarchical
embraces the unknown	avoids the unknown
externally directed	internally directed
long-term orientation	short-term orientation
outcomes are secondary	outcomes are paramount

Table 1, adapted from Robertson (2000, p. 66).

Robertson’s research suggests that as a result of its culture, the CF tends to be hierarchical, avoids change and is short-term goal oriented, perhaps at the expense of innovation and meaningful, long-term change.

Robertson’s assessment of the cultural characteristics of the CF finds interesting correlation in a study of brain quadrant thinking preferences. Nasmyth, Schultz and Williams (2003) conducted a study of the thinking preferences of 70 members of the CF involved in an advanced degree program at a Canadian university. Using the Herrmann Brain Dominance Instrument (HBDI), they found a preference towards left-brain thinking within the sample

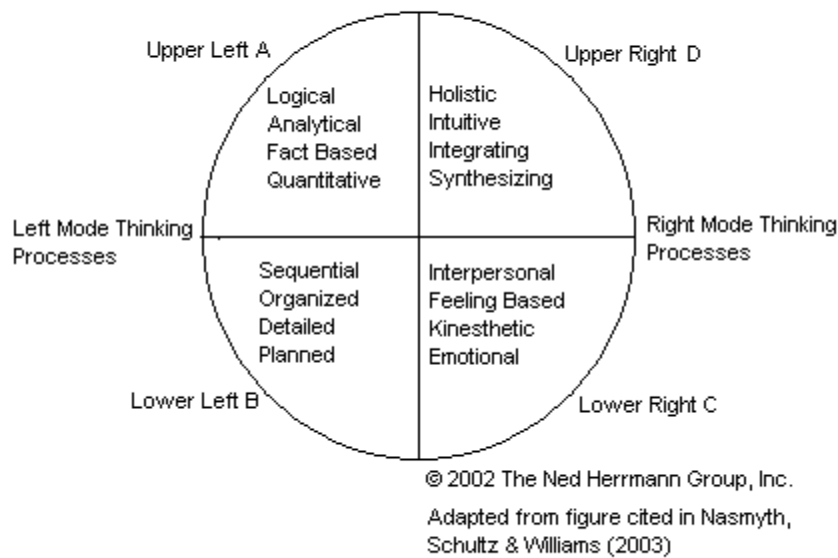


Figure 2. The Herrmann Full Brain Model

population indicating, “a preference for logical and conservative thinking” (p. 13).

Organizations dominated by left-brain thinking “are hierarchical, resist change, follow abstract rules, and leave little room for personal discretion or interdependence, potentially creating interpersonal tension and organizational stagnation” (pp. 13-14). Right-brained organizations, on the other hand, “tend to foster a service and people centred culture...” (p. 14). Interestingly, the sample group showed multi-dominance of the upper left A, lower left B, and upper right D quadrants, with a relative lack of preference for lower-right C thinking associated with interpersonal, spiritual, and emotional issues. “It lacks a level of ‘personal touch’ that would be present if the lower right C quadrant were also primary” (p. 15).

If military leaders have a different gestalt (morality, duty and honour) from business leaders, one that emphasizes integrity, ethics and responsibility, then leaders must be

competent in interpersonal leadership. The brain dominance model suggests quadrant C in particular contributes to this competency (p. 17).

In some ways, it may be said that the effort to develop a more balanced, “full-brain” thinking model is consistent with a desire to move the CF towards the culture of a learning organization. An improved awareness of behaviors associated with the interpersonal aspects of leadership can contribute to more balanced thinking and better leader effectiveness with respect to leading organizational change and developing transformational leadership (p. 18). 360° feedback can provide leaders with this awareness.

Summary

We have seen how the culture of the Canadian Forces tends to be:

- a. Varied across the services, branches and units,
- b. Hierarchical,
- c. Short-term goal oriented,
- d. Resistant to change,
- e. Conservative;
- f. Anti-intellectual;
- g. Lacking a spirit of inquiry; and
- h. Left-brain dominant at the expense of interpersonal leadership.

Yet these characteristics are inconsistent with the culture found in a learning organization. If the culture of the CF is to become more aligned with that of a learning organization, an increased awareness of and emphasis on right-brain thinking, interpersonal leadership skills is essential. 360° feedback can provide leaders with that awareness.

Current Perceptions of Leadership – Perceived Leadership Deficiencies

Many of the characteristics of the Canadian Forces' culture described above may be leading to some of the negative perceptions of leadership expressed recently by members of the Canadian Forces and others. If the current cultural climate in the CF is contributing to a perception of ineffective leadership, then a case may be made for 360° feedback as an instrument of personal development and cultural change. A review of the literature reveals that indeed, leadership provided in the CF is not perceived as being supportive, and that its effectiveness is over-estimated by the leaders.

In 1995, the Phillips Military and Civilian Employee Feedback Survey (Phillips Group, 1995) administered within the Department of National Defence and the CF cast doubts on the quality of leadership being provided within the organization. It should be remembered that this survey was administered during the Forces Reduction Program, and during the high-profile Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia, both of which represented serious leadership challenges. Notwithstanding, the results were interesting. It found that among military members, only 17% agreed with the statement "I have confidence in the most senior levels of the Department to lead us through these difficult times" (p. 4). Issues of leadership were the most common open-ended comments offered. Members cited concerns about leaders "building their empires", "following their personal agenda", and about the organization being too bureaucratic (p. 4).

Also in 1995, a series of working groups were conducted to study Quality of Life (QOL) issues in the Army. In their report, the authors described "a serious loss of confidence and loyalty on the part of members towards military leadership, which carries with it the danger of a negative impact on operational effectiveness" (Modernization of the quality of life in the army—

Final report. Cited in Eyres, 1998). Following up on this study, Eyres (1998), conducted a survey of 913 Army personnel, concluding,

Canadian NCMs, notably junior NCMs, do not hold their officers in particularly high esteem. In general, NCMs appear to be at best indifferent towards the leadership demonstrated by Junior officers and appear only slightly more positive about Senior officer leadership. All ranks, on the other hand, appear to be satisfied with leadership shown by MCpls and Snr NCOs (Eyres, 1998, Discussion).

Moreover, Eyres found that officers evaluated the effects of their leadership higher than their followers did:

The present study suggests that regardless of the reason, leaders in the Canadian Army may not be well-placed to assess the effects on subordinates of their leadership initiatives and those of their subordinate leaders. At all levels, they significantly over-estimate the success and effectiveness of those initiatives and as a result are likely unable to distinguish between effective leadership and command, between following and compliance, with attendant consequences on their units' operational effectiveness (Eyres, 1998, Summary).

To paraphrase the results of Eyres' study, leaders in the Canadian Forces are not perceived as providing good leadership to their subordinates, and they seem by-and-large to be unaware of their ineffectiveness.

A follow-up to the Phillips survey (1995) was the D2000 survey in 1999. While finding many promising areas of improvement since 1995, it concluded that when it comes to leadership, CF military personnel and civilian employees still:

... do not see their supervisor as someone who is willing to take a strong stand or personal risk on behalf of the best interests of the workplace but rather someone who is more concerned with advancing his career through pleasing superiors. Only about 30% of respondents believe there have been improvements in leadership since 1995 (DND, 1999, para. 92).

Despite some optimistic signs of change at the organizational level, it seems our leaders are still in need of development, starting with an awareness of their impact on subordinates.

The Canadian Forces as a Learning Organization?

The concept of the Learning Organization was brought into the business mainstream by Peter Senge (1990) who defined it as “a place where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to act together” (p. 3). Fenwick (1996) expands on this idea, focusing on the concept of the learning organization as one that embraces change and adapts to changing circumstances. “The learning organization concept presumes continuous change to drive the center of the organization’s activity, and continuous innovation and adaptation to characterize the organization’s response to change” (p. 6).

The Canadian Forces purports to be striving to become a learning organization. This objective is clearly articulated from the top levels of the organization. The Minister of National Defence stated, “Mr. Speaker, Officership 2020 is a new blueprint for leadership and professional development for the Canadian forces. In fact our aim is to help make the Canadian forces into a learning organization” (Parliament of Canada, 2001, National Defence, para. 4). According to the Chief of the Defence Staff, General Henault, “We want to create a learning

culture within the Canadian Forces. We want to develop creative, motivated personnel and we want to give them a stimulating work environment” (Henault, 2002). In a speech to the Canadian Forces Chief Warrant Officer Conference, General Henault explained, “... we are currently making far-reaching changes to professional development and education in the Canadian Forces. Our aim is to promote a learning culture at all ranks and levels” (Henault, 2003). In his annual report entitled *A Time for Transformation*, the Chief of the Defence Staff said:

If there was ever a time for a progressive, transformative agenda, that time is now. To do so, in my view, we must move forward aggressively and accelerate our efforts to transform the Canadian Forces and our national defence and security apparatus on three levels. First, we must transform the way we perceive and think.... We are moving from an industrial, hierarchical mode of thinking to a world powered by collaborative human networks. We must learn to think, behave, and act as a node in a collaborative network that includes our warfighters, all three military environments, our civilian colleagues in the department and broader public security portfolio, as well as our allies (DND 2003a, p. II).

Following this direction, the “Learning Organization” concept has found root in strategic documents, plans and policies throughout the CF. As mentioned earlier, *Officership 2020* (DND 2001) established as one of the eight Strategic Objectives:

The CF as a Learning Organization. Create the policies and conditions that will transform the CF into a true learning organization. The CF must be skilled at acquiring and transferring knowledge and at encouraging behavior that reflects new knowledge and

insights. The CF must promote and support learning, learn from experience, embrace diversity, and focus on serving its membership. (DND 2001, p. 7)

Setting the strategic direction for Human Resources policy in the Canadian Forces, the policy paper *Military HR Strategy 2020* describes the culture required in the CF as follows: “The organizational culture must be one that reflects the importance of a learning organisation through the encouragement and promotion of professional development among its people” (DND, 2002).

Articulated beyond strategy and policy, Defence Administrative Orders and Directives (DAOD) give specific direction: “CF members must be capable of thinking critically and managing change so that the CF can develop its capabilities and prepare for operations as a learning organization” (DND 2003b, Overview, para. 1). So we see that the CF has clearly set a goal for transforming the culture of the CF to that of a “Learning Organization”, however, it is not clear when that goal can be achievable given the current cultural reality in the CF.

Contrary to the characteristics of a Learning Organization, in a 1999 survey of Canadian Forces general officers, Adams-Roy found that 55.6% disagreed with the statement “It is permissible for CF members to question lawful commands” (cited in Wenek, 2002, p. 27). Wenek uses this study as a basis to question if the “necessary shift in attitudes and style could be a particular challenge for CF leadership” in its evolution towards a Learning Organization (p. 27). He goes on to point out that “In a number of respects, the CF currently lacks several attributes of a learning culture and learning organization (e.g., resists acknowledging failure, does not strive for continuous improvement, does not adequately delegate responsibility and authority, exhibits anti-intellectual tendencies)” (p. 28). Wenek’s comments about “anti-intellectual tendencies” echo previous observations of the culture within the Canadian Forces. In a rather passionate address to the Conference of Defence Associations Institute, Dr J.L.

Granatstein laments that after World War II, as a result of the neglect of education, intellectual and professional debate, and due in part to having to sustain high-tempo operations with insufficient resources,

The CF became noted for anti-intellectualism.... the result is that openness to ideas is killed at birth.... Essentially, the “no thinking necessary” culture of the Canadian Forces has demonstrated that it cannot deal with the challenges it faces. If the Canadian Forces are to survive, they must be able to change. And in no area is change more important than in the “no thinking necessary” culture that afflicts the Canadian military today (Granatstein, 1998, para. 9).

The Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Deployment of Canadian Forces to Somalia (DND, 1997) examined the killing by members of the Canadian Airborne Regiment of a young Somali male during a CF humanitarian mission, and the subsequent mishandling of the situation that reached into the highest ranks of the CF. Speaking to the cultural factors that may have contributed to how the matter was handled by senior officers once it reached National Defence Headquarters, the commission found,

. . . these individuals must be viewed as products of a system that placed great store in the ‘can do’ attitude. The reflex to say ‘yes sir’ rather than to question the appropriateness of a command or policy obviously runs against the grain of free and open discussion, but it is ingrained in military discipline and culture. (*Dishonoured Legacy*, Vol 4, p. 953 cited in Wenek, 2002, p. 8)

Despite the differences between the actual CF culture and that of a Learning Organization, recent changes and initiatives within the CF reflect commitments made by the

senior leadership of the CF. The following steps taken by the CF signal a commitment to changing that culture:

- establishment of the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute in September 2001 as a Centre of Excellence for leadership research and concept development in the CF;
- an expansion of the educational benefits available to CF members under the Personal Enhancement Program (PEP);
- implementation of the Advanced Education for Officers and the Army Officer Degree Programs; and
- the establishment of the Canadian Defence Academy in 2002 to oversee and support the professional development for all members of the CF.

These are all examples of the steps being taken to “walk the talk” of the learning organization. We can conclude from a review of the literature, however, that the following cultural characteristics will have to be overcome before the changes above reach their full potential:

- The CF is a conservative organization that typically is slow to adapt to innovation.
- The CF has been generally shortsighted and aimed at immediate, rather than long-term goals.
- It is generally hierarchical, with strict lines of communication up and down the chain of command.
- There tends to be a zero-fault, can-do attitude that discourages experimentation.

- There continues to be a belief that it is inappropriate for subordinates to question orders.

Summary

When considering the cultural implications of introducing 360° feedback into the CF, two interrelated aspects of culture must be considered. First, full recognition must be given to the climate of distrust in leadership, fear of repercussions, and the culture of anti-innovation. Measures must be put in place to overcome these obstacles during the implementation of any 360° feedback system in the CF.

Second, while being influenced by the cultural factors discussed above, it should be realized that 360° feedback has a role to play in shaping organizational culture, and can be used as an instrument of positive cultural change in the CF. Specifically, it can help in the CF's evolution towards a Learning Organization by building trust and dialogue, playing an important role in the development of leaders, and contributing to an environment of positive change and innovation.

Potential Solutions to the Problem/Opportunity

The literature reviewed suggests that 360° feedback can be effective as a leadership development tool in the Canadian Forces as long as the following conditions are met:

- Participants are involved in the design of the instrument and feel an ownership of the leadership profile (Goldsmith and Underhill, 2001).
- Follow-up is an essential part of the process (Pfau, Kay, Nowack and Ghorpade, 2002; Vinson, 1996).
- Anonymity and confidentiality are essential (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).
- 360° feedback should be used for development only, not assessment or as the basis for

administrative decisions (Vinson, 1996; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).

A detailed examination of the first of these conditions will provide the Canadian Forces with a first step towards the design of an effective 360° feedback instrument for leader development.

As such, a case-study of the participatory design process used in the US Army Ranger Regiment, and under development for another elite operational branch of the United States Army Special Operations Command, will be the focus of this study, followed by recommendations as to the extent to which those processes may be adapted for use in the CF.

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Methods

The research question was examined from a participative action research perspective. It was qualitative in nature, relying upon the experiences and opinions of others involved in the design of 360° feedback programs in place and under development in the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC).

Data Gathering Tools

Three data gathering tools were used in the conduct of this research, consisting of the literature review, semi-structured interviews, and the researcher's participation in an item sort.

Literature Review

First, a comprehensive review of pertinent literature framed the research question, providing a “conceptual context” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 27) for the research that followed. It established the effectiveness of 360° feedback, demonstrated its successful employment in a military environment, and showed the potential for 360° feedback to meet both the leadership development, and cultural change requirements of the CF.

Interviews

Second, semi-structured interviews were conducted with specialists involved in the development of the US Rangers' 360° feedback instrument, and a separate instrument currently being designed for another branch of USASOC. The interview form of data collection was chosen because blind anonymity of the subject-matter experts was not required. The questions were more in-depth and required probing and follow-up, and subjective opinion on the effectiveness of the 360° feedback instrument design process was being sought. This method therefore met the criteria required for its selection (Sproull, 1988, p. 162).

It was felt that face-to-face interviews better provided the opportunity to build the trust and understanding required, to obtain such subjective information. Interviewees described USASOC as a “closed community”, and its members have a legitimate requirement to limit the nature of the information they make available. By establishing a face-to-face relationship with those involved in the development of their 360° feedback instruments, a freer flow of information was encouraged. Finally, the researcher’s previous formal training in interview techniques, and three years employment of these techniques as a military career councilor, helped ensure the effective employment of this method of data collection.

The interview questions were determined based on the requirement to identify the motives behind selecting 360° feedback, its fit with the military and unit-specific culture, the participative, bottom-up nature of the design process, its implementation, and what follow-up research or revalidation studies have been conducted. Other, more critical questions were then added on the advice of this research project’s sponsor. These questions were designed to investigate the following:

- the disadvantages of the 360° feedback model;
- the choice not to adapt an existing off-the-shelf instrument;
- difficulties experienced by involving so many participants in the design process;
- weaknesses of the instrument;
- questions concerning *groupthink* (Janis, 1971, 1972) as a result of the internal, bottom-up nature of design; and
- retrospectively, what would be done differently.

As a result, it was hoped that the modified interview questions would provide more critically balanced data. Interview data was recorded by manual note taking, and the notes were

subsequently confirmed with the interviewees by email.

Item Sort

Third, the researcher was unexpectedly invited to participate in a sort of leadership items along with two members of the US Army Special Operations Command, Psychological Applications Directorate, in support of a 360° feedback instrument currently being designed for the leadership of an elite branch of the US Army Special Operations Command. The results of the item sort in which the researcher participated were compared to a previous leadership item sort done by members of this elite unit. In so doing, the extent of concurrence between two different perspectives on leadership – one, a bottom-up insider perspective, the other, an outsider, top-down perspective - was determined. The extent of this concurrence is hypothesized to relate to the extent to which an outsider, top-down approach to 360° feedback leadership survey would effectively capture the leadership performance from a follower point-of-view. It therefore relates directly to the research question by suggesting a process suitable for the design of a Canadian Forces instrument.

Study Conduct

Literature Review and Interviews

In the course of conducting the literature review, contact was made with the Psychological Applications Directorate (PAD) of the US Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) responsible for the introduction of *The Leader's Edge*, as well as with the researcher responsible for its development and implementation. This resulted in an invitation to visit the directorate and gather more information. The original plan was to interview the researcher, Kristin Richmond, and those officers responsible for the implementation of the 360° feedback instrument within USASOC, as well as with the survey participants involved in its bottom-up

development. Unfortunately, by the time the visit was conducted, most original participants in the development process were either operationally deployed, or had been reassigned to other duties as a normal part of their career progression. As a result, only the interviewee with direct experience developing the Rangers' instrument was the primary researcher, Kristin Richmond.

There is currently a second 360° feedback instrument being developed for another branch of USASOC, which is following a similar methodology to that used in the development of the Rangers' *Leader's Edge*. This provided an opportunity to expand the scope of this research to include an examination of the development process for both instruments. As a result, interviews were conducted with two other military psychologists involved in the development of this new instrument. In addition, the author participated in a sort of leadership items as part of that process. Results of this sort will be discussed below.

Original plans also included the subsequent interviewing of members of the Canadian Forces to determine the extent to which 360° feedback might be perceived as beneficial, and the extent to which the American military experience with 360° feedback instrument design might apply in Canada. As a result of the literature review outlining CF experience with 360° feedback, and the cultural and leadership development surveys that have been conducted to date, this was deemed to be more appropriately examined in the course of further research. It was felt that the introduction of further data that did not directly support the examination of the American design process might cloud, rather than clarify the research question. As a result, it was decided not to proceed with the interview of Canadian subjects at this time.

Item Sort

The results of two leadership item sorts will be compared and discussed. The items sorted consisted of 242 leadership behaviors identified by members of an elite operational

branch of the USASOC (referred to hereafter as “insiders”), as examples of good and bad leadership practices. These items were determined by the “insiders” through a series of focus groups, facilitated by PAD staff. These “insiders” then conducted their own subjective factor analysis, grouping the 242 items into 24 self-determined leadership competencies, or *dimensions*. In this way, the target group of the 360° feedback survey was able to identify their own leadership dimensions, and to define which behaviors represented examples of what dimensions.

4 Leadership Categories

17 Leadership Dimensions

Figure 3 - Army Leadership Framework (Department of the Army (U.S.), 1999).

Next, the researcher and two members of the USASOC PAD (hereafter referred to as

“outsiders”), blind to the competencies into which the insiders had sorted their items, did their own factor sort of the same items. This time, however, the items were sorted into the three components of the US Army’s leadership principle of Be, Know, Do (Department of the Army (U.S.), 1999), and their corresponding categories and dimensions (figure 2).

Within “Be” are the two leadership categories of *Values* and *Attributes*. “Know” referred to the leadership category of *Skills*, and “Do” referred to those *Actions* required of a leader to put his or her skills, values and attitudes to effective use. Beneath each of the four categories was divided a total of 17 leadership dimensions.

Step 1. Each of the three “outsiders” was given 242 slips of paper, each printed with one of the leadership items identified by the insiders. They then sorted each of these items as belonging to either the “Be”, “Know”, or “Do” component of leadership. Each of the three then presented their results to the others. Initial concurrence was achieved on 128 of the 242 items, and through a process of explaining the subjective rationale for their choices, final concurrence was reached. Each item was then collectively assigned to one of the 17 subordinate dimensions (Department of the Army (U.S.), 1999) through a process of subjective judgment and compromise, and a collective item sort was produced.

Step 2. The three outsiders then examined each of the item’s 24 insider-assigned components, independent of the items, and equated them to one or more of the 17 manual-defined dimensions. The insider-defined category of “Courage of Conviction” was subjectively judged by the outsiders as corresponding to the leadership dimensions of “Be – Integrity”, and “Be – Personal Courage” (Department of the Army (U.S.), 1999). The outsiders subjectively judged the insider-defined component “Stability”, as corresponding to the leadership dimension, “Be – Emotional (attributes)”. The insider-defined component of “Sets Soldiers Up for Success”

was subjectively judged by the outsiders as corresponding to the leadership dimensions of “Be – Respect”, “Do – Improving”, and “Do – Operating”, and so on.

Step 3. The outsiders’ sort of items into the dimensions defined in the leadership manual was then reintroduced. If an item (sorted by the outsiders into one of the leadership manual’s dimensions at Step 1) had been assigned by the insiders to a comparable component of leadership (as judged by the insiders in Step 2), then the item was deemed to achieve concurrence between the two sorting groups as representing a comparable factor of leadership.

It was hypothesized that if a top-down assessment of leadership dimensions and corresponding items by the outsiders accurately reflected the insider’s bottom-up perception of leadership items and corresponding dimensions, then there should have been a high degree of concurrence between the dimensions into which the insiders sorted the items, compared to those dimensions and categories into which the outsiders sorted the items.

Conversely, if there was not a high level of congruence between the dimensions into which the insiders sorted their items and the dimensions / categories into which the outsiders sorted them, it would suggest that a different picture of leader behavior and what that behavior represented existed within the branch (as represented by the “insiders”) as compared to outside (as represented by the “outsiders”). It would therefore stand to reason that an externally designed 360° feedback instrument using outsider-designed items and domains might not accurately identify leadership items as reflecting leadership competencies or domains from the followers’ perspective. In that case, an argument could be made for the increased validity of 360° feedback instruments in which the target population has a major role in the identification of leader behavior items and the leadership dimensions they represent. This could then in turn inform the research question by suggesting a way ahead for the design of a Canadian 360°

feedback instrument.

Study Participants

Study participants were referred by LTC L.M. Banks, Director of the USASOC Psychological Applications Directorate (PAD). Those participants included the following:

- Kristin Richmond – civilian consultant and principal researcher who developed The Leader’s Edge for the Rangers, and is currently involved with the development of the second 360° feedback instrument for a different branch of USASOC.
- LTC S. Middleton – military clinical psychologist currently working with Kristin Richmond on the development of a 360° feedback instrument for a different branch of USASOC.
- Maj G. Hazlett - Command psychologist, USASOC, working with Kristin Richmond and LTC Middleton with particular interest paid to the integration of the new 360° feedback instrument into the six-stage career development model of officers within this particular branch of USASOC.

Analysis

Interviews

After the interviews were conducted, the data was manually analyzed by reviewing the notes to determine inter-interviewee reliability, and establish common themes. Once established, these themes were then tested against other published literature to confirm their external validity.

An independent report to USASOC (London & Smither, 1998), which examined Kristin Richmond’s research and development of The Rangers’ *Leader’s Edge*, was reviewed to help establish the level of rigor applied to her work.

Item Sort

With respect to the sorting of leadership items identified by the “insider” members of the other branch of the USASOC, the level of concurrence between the leadership dimensions into which the three “outsiders” sorted the leadership items, and those dimensions into which the “insiders” sorted their items, was examined. Did the competencies into which the insiders sorted their items correspond to the domains into which the outsiders sorted them? It was hypothesized that the level of concurrence would correspond to the extent to which a top-down, externally designed 360° instrument might accurately identify and measure leader behavior from a participant point-of-view.

CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH STUDY RESULTS

Study Findings

Findings from Literature Review

The research conducted during the literature review led to the following findings:

- 360 degree feedback can be highly effective for leader development and as an instrument of cultural change provided that participants are involved in the design of the instrument and feel an ownership of the leadership profile (Goldsmith and Underhill, 2001). Follow-up is an essential part of the process (Pfau, Kay, Nowack and Ghorpade, 2002; Vinson, 1996). Anonymity and confidentiality are essential (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998), and 360° feedback should be used for development only, not assessment or as the basis for administrative decisions (Vinson, 1996; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998).
- 360° feedback has been successfully employed within a military environment. American experience has been most extensive, and development there continues as the instruments are refined. Within the CF, the employment of 360° is growing, with both off-the-shelf and semi-customized surveys being used mostly at the executive levels. Still lacking, however, is an integrated approach to its application and a common reference to clearly defined leadership competencies and supporting behaviors.
- A review of the literature pertaining to the perception of leadership within the CF leads to two disturbing conclusions.
 - First, leaders are perceived as not providing good leadership (Phillips, 1995; Eyres, 1998; DND, 1999).
 - Second, leaders seem to be by-and-large unaware of these perceptions (Eyres, 1998). 360° feedback can increase the awareness of leadership of their effects on

their followers, and can promote an increase in trust and open dialogue. Its value as a leader development tool has been clearly demonstrated in both the civilian and military spheres; and

- The CF has set a goal of changing its culture to become more like a Learning Organization (Parliament of Canada, 2001; DND, 2001; Henault, 2002; DND, 2003). Unfortunately, the literature reviewed indicates that the CF has major cultural changes to make before such a transformation can take place (Granatstein, 1998; DND, 1997; Wenek, 2002). It has been demonstrated that 360° feedback programs can be effective as instruments of cultural change.

Findings from Interviews

Analysis of the interview data revealed three major themes that were identified by each interviewee:

- 360° feedback was introduced into the Ranger Regiment in order to affect positive cultural change, as well as to develop leadership. It was directed from the senior level of command in order to bring specific cultural and leadership improvements, and ultimately to improve the combat effectiveness of the organization. The effectiveness of 360° feedback as an instrument of both cultural change and leader development is confirmed by Tonrow and Tonrow (2001, p. 52), and Garavan, Morley & Flynn (1997, p. 136);
- Buy-in is critical to the success of a 360° feedback program, and was achieved through the bottom-up participation of the target population in the identification of leadership items and domains for the design of their instrument; and
- Groupthink (Janis, 1971, 1972), which can potentially result in the imbedding of existing

culture in the instrument rather than identification and encouragement of the new, desired culture, can be avoided by top-down direction, but was not evidenced in the development of *The Leader's Edge*. Participants in the design process from within the target population knew what effective leadership looked like, notwithstanding the negative aspects of leadership and culture that senior leadership was trying to correct by the introduction of 360° feedback.

During the interview with Richmond (nee Roukema), she provided a copy of her research that outlined the design and implementation of *The Leaders' Edge* (Roukema, 1997), as well as a report by notable 360° feedback specialists (London & Smither, 1998) on their review of that research and design. These documents were used as supplemental sources of data, included in the interview section.

Kristin Richmond's *Leader's Edge* design process followed the following steps:

- a. lit review, observation of the Ranger selection process and consultation with senior subject matter experts determined an outline of leadership dimensions specific to this particular unit (Roukema, 1997, p. 20);
- b. Two groups of six and nine soldiers were formed, representing the three bases where this unit's battalions were stationed. They were interviewed in these groups and asked to generate a comprehensive list of leadership domains so as to compare with the theoretical domains identified in the previous step. They were then asked to generate effective and ineffective leadership behaviors that described each of these factors (Roukema, 1997, p. 20). This resulted in a preliminary list of over 500 items (London & Smither, 1998, Development, para. 2);

- c. 31 additional soldiers representing two of the bases then were divided into four groups and given the list. Each group took from four to five hours reviewing the list "in terms of representative sampling of the domain and relativity to the construct of military leadership" (Roukema, 1997, pp. 20-21). In so doing, they reduced the 500 items to about 300 (London & Smither, 1998, Development, para 2). This process was later repeated with a group of 10 soldiers from the command group headquarters and 6 military psychologists. The content of the items and dimensions were modified "until it was determined by expert judgment that the factors and questions were comprehensive and representative of the construct dubbed military leadership" (Roukema, 1997, pp. 20-21), leaving 250 questions falling into 20 domains;
- d. Once the questions were written and assigned to a domain, 26 soldiers (divided into three groups of 8-10) and four IO Psychologists (who participated separately by email) participated in an item sort. Each individual was given a package of 250 items and the separate dimensions, and asked to sort each item into the most appropriate dimension. This "construct sort identified new factors and required a second sort" (Roukema, 1997, p. 21). The process was repeated at a second location with 30 soldiers divided into three groups of 8-10. As a result of the additional feedback, new questions were written or questions were deleted which were consistent or not with the "overall construct of military leadership" (Roukema, 1997, p. 21), reducing the total number of items to 223;
- e. The questions were then put into survey form and administered to a trial group of 40 target leaders and their 365 supervisors, peers and subordinates (Roukema, 1997, p. 21).
- f. Finally, once the data from the trial was compiled, reliability and validity analysis was conducted using SPSS software package and there was "an examination of item-total

correlations and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) estimates" (London & Richmond, 1998, Development, para. 8). Items were deleted or changed to different scales, resulting in a final set of 180 items assigned to one of 20 scales.

The final survey, with its 180 items, has been in use with the Rangers since. Richmond identified the need to validate the instrument, as this has not been done since the final version was introduced over six years ago. She stated that this validation is particularly important in light of the change in organizational climate and operational environment since the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and the subsequent focus of the U.S. military on the 'War Against Terror' (personal communication, November 11, 2003).

Richmond concluded (Roukema, 1997, p. 41):

- Overall consistency of the instrument she designed was strong;
- The evidence for construct and content validity was strong;
- The instrument covers the domain of military leadership found within the unit it was designed for and converges with that leadership construct;
- There were concerns raised over inter-rater reliability and she recommended further research to determine if that was a result of the questions, or the raters; and
- The instrument is gaining increased popularity within the target population.

London and Smither (1998) reviewed her procedures, data, findings and conclusions and reported:

- Richmond's design of the Ranger's 360° feedback instrument "seems to have followed generally accepted professional practices" (Conclusions);
- "Especially commendable are the literature review, observation of RASP (Ranger Assessment Selection Program) Board decisions, focus groups (and gathering critical

incidents) from a cross-section of Rangers, ... collecting preliminary ratings from over 400 raters concerning 39 target leaders, and the use of item-total corrections, alpha coefficients, and factor analysis to identify a statistically defensible and conceptually rational set of questions and dimensions” (Conclusions);

- that her “development efforts are consistent with those recommended by Van Velsor and Leslie (1991a, 1991b)” (Conclusions); and
- that these efforts “far exceeded the level of rigor usually found in the development of multi-source feedback scales in the private (corporate) sector” (Conclusions).

The interviews and related documents found that the bottom-up, target-group participation in the design of *The Leader’s Edge* resulted in a valid, defensible, highly effective instrument that met the leadership feedback and cultural change requirements of the target population in a way that an off-the-shelf, semi-customized, or exclusively top-down designed instrument likely could not.

Findings from Item Sort

The “insiders” of the other branch of the USASOC originally identified 242 leadership items in May 2003, and included them all in their sort. These items are identified at Appendix A.

The subsequent sort conducted by the “outsiders” (including the researcher) originally included all 242 of these items. Ten of those items were subsequently removed from the sort by PAD subject matter experts because they were deemed to be repetitive, could potentially be misinterpreted by survey participants, or were inappropriate. In addition, three of the items were listed twice, as “they loaded on two different domains somewhat equally” (personal correspondence, LTC Middleton, 18 Feb 2004). As a result, 235 items (including three which

were listed twice) remained in the final data. The results of the outsiders' factor sort, along with whether concurrence was found with the insiders' sort, are detailed at Appendix B.

Overall, concurrence was established on only 98 of the 235 items. The insiders and outsiders failed to load the remaining 137 items into comparable leadership domains, meaning the outsiders identified only 41.7% of the items as representative of leadership dimensions similar to what the insiders identified them as representing. Caution must be applied due to the very small number of subjects (3) involved in the sort, and the results achieved should be interpreted as being preliminary, and suggestive of further research. However, in this case, the results seem to indicate that perceptions of leadership, and specifically perceptions of what leadership items/behaviors corresponded to which leadership dimensions, can differ dramatically between the insiders and outsiders, and that if a 360° feedback instrument was designed by outsiders without the input of those within the target population, that instrument could misrepresent the subjects' strengths and weaknesses within their leadership dimensions. For example, if an item thought by insiders to reflect a leader's integrity, was interpreted by the survey designers to represent the leader's personal courage, it would negatively impact the validity (Scholz & Tietje, 2002, p. 336; Sproull, 1988, p. 73) of the instrument.

Study Conclusion

Based on the literature review, interviews and the researcher's participation in the leadership item sort, it is concluded that there is value in the design of 360° feedback instruments for leader development and cultural change in the Canadian Forces. Furthermore, inclusion of bottom-up, follower, and target group participation in that design process may result in a more accurate understanding of the unique leadership constructs found within the different environmental

branches, arms and units of the CF, and in turn, may lead to the creation of instruments with increased face and construct validity. The work conducted by Richmond (Roukema, 1997), and then implemented in the US Army 75 Ranger Regiment in the form of *The Leaders' Edge*, seems to demonstrate an effective means of incorporating that bottom-up perspective into the design of a leadership feedback instrument.

Study Recommendations

Recommendation One

The Canadian Forces should seriously study the integration of a 360° feedback component into the officer professional development system. Consideration should be given to coordinating the design and implementation of these instruments with a members' progression through the Developmental Period (DP) system in order to establish a career-long approach to continued feedback, improvement, and learning.

Recommendation Two

Implementation of such a system should begin at the senior officer level and work back through the ranks, in order to achieve command support (buy-in), prior to its introduction at the subordinate levels. While the items contained in the unique instruments designed for each Developmental Period may be different, a systemic, coordinated approach, to support and encourage a common leadership construct and organizational culture across the periods of an officer's career would help maintain the continuity of the system and thus the value of the program. An officer's level of generalization tends to increase as he/she progresses through the DPs. The focus of an infantry Second-Lieutenant rifle platoon commander is much more specific than that of a Colonel commanding a brigade group or a Lieutenant-General environmental commander. The instruments designed for these different levels would therefore

need to focus their items on the elements of leadership found in those different situations. The more junior the target leader, the more situation-specific the items would need to be, and the more input would be required from the followers and peers in the design of that instrument. The CF has already introduced 360° feedback at Canadian Forces Command and Staff College (CFCSC), and the Unit Command Profile and Unit Morale Profile has gained some exposure in Army units. As a result, most Lieutenant Colonel unit commanding officers should be familiar with the concept. A unit (battalion, ship, regiment, air squadron) usually represents the largest group in which a common military sub-culture exists, and the first level of command led by those who would likely have previous exposure to 360° feedback methodology through CFCSC. It is therefore recommended that a new 360° feedback development program be initiated at the Lieutenant Colonel / Commander level. Subsequent coordination of similar instruments as part of the systemic, coordinated approach to 360° feedback could then continue from there.

Recommendation Three

The potential of the approach taken by Richmond in the design of *The Leader's Edge* – one involving the led in the design of the instrument measuring their leadership – is significant. Participation of this target group in the design of their instrument is essential (Goldsmith & Underhill, 2001). Richmond's methods have been reviewed and found to be valid by experts in the field (London & Smither, 1998). Therefore, if 360° feedback instruments are to be designed for use in the CF, it is recommended that significant input be sought from subordinates and peers within the target group. The “unique culture that influences acceptable leadership styles in [each] service” (English, 2002), and indeed in each branch of the services, must be taken into account in the design of the instruments meant to measure them. The design example of *The Leaders' Edge* showed us an effective way of doing this.

CHAPTER FIVE – RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS

Organizational Implementation

If 360° feedback is to be introduced into the CF as an instrument of leader development and cultural change, there are inherent requirements that the Canadian Forces must meet. Specifically, there are things it needs to *Know*, and things it needs to *Do*.

What the CF Needs to Know

- Establish the Desired Leadership and Cultural End-State

Prior to initiating development of any program aimed at the development of leadership and the change of culture, the CF needs to determine what construct of military leadership they see as desirable, and they must clearly articulate the cultural change required. English (2002) described the significant leadership and cultural differences found across the services and between the branches of those services. The CF must identify what, in addition to the general, common leadership construct forces-wide, they want to see within each of those sub-cultures.

- While the general leadership construct is currently being defined in the development of leadership doctrine at the Canadian Forces Leadership Institute, this is only the start. From there, further refinement of leadership as it manifests itself in the various units, branches and services of the CF will be required. The bottom-up methods presented here might well have an important role to play, in addition to their application to 360° feedback instrument design.

What the CF Must Do

Building on the knowledge detailed above, if 360° feedback is to be integrated into a

coordinated, systemic approach to leader development in the CF, there are a number of things that must be done.

- First, effective instruments must be designed, specific and unique to their target population. Whether piloted in an infantry battalion, warship, fighter squadron or training establishment, a process of participatory, bottom-up survey design that engages the target population in the creation of their instrument is essential to this process.
- Any system of survey application must incorporate provisions for anonymity and confidentiality (Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998), and detailed, professional debriefing and coaching (Pfau, Kay, Nowack and Ghorpade, 2002; Vinson, 1996). Whether provided by military psychologists or civilian consultants, debriefing and follow-up must be built into the program.
- Finally, the importance of integrating a 360° feedback program into the Canadian Forces Officer Professional Development System has already been discussed, but it must be stressed that it should be used for development only, and not for assessment (Vinson, 1996; Alimo-Metcalfe, 1998). This might best be accomplished by integrating a 360° feedback program into the Developmental Period (DP) model of professional development, rather than into the supervisor-member focused Canadian Forces Personal Assessment System (CFPAS).

Future Research

While common sense and the limited research conducted herein seems to suggest that there is value in a bottom-up process of survey design, related literature on this aspect of 360° feedback instrument design is lacking.

... thoughts about 'bottom up' development of 360 instruments seem right on target but I

regret to report that I have not seen any literature on the topic. ... It's merely a logical extension of other job analysis methods that are used to drive other performance management processes in many organizations. (Dr J. Smither, personal correspondence, 22 Nov 2003).

Further research is recommended to compare the validity of surveys incorporating a bottom-up approach to their design, versus those which do not, within a given target group.

CHAPTER SIX – LESSONS LEARNED

Research Project Lessons Learned

A review of the conduct and management of this project identified a number of areas for improvement.

The researcher started this project with intentions to research, develop, and trial a 360° feedback instrument. Naturally, the scope of such a project was huge, well beyond the capabilities afforded by time, and well beyond that expected at the Masters level. Future researchers would be well advised to narrow their focus early, and address a very specific research question, perhaps with the secondary purpose of suggesting further areas of study.

The researcher did not have any academic training in psychology, which proved to be a disadvantage when it came to introducing some concepts in the literature review. Even introductory courses in psychology at the undergraduate level would have assisted in the writing and integration of this material. In addition, experience with research techniques and data analysis would have helped increase the significance of the learning associated with the factor sort conducted with the USASOC.

The internet and email were a valuable asset when searching for subject matter experts, and related literature. Increased familiarity with automated search techniques, online databases, and full-text document retrieval were a definite asset.

Notwithstanding the strength of the internet-based tools noted above, nothing replaces face-to-face contact when searching for relevant information, perspectives, and opinion. The face-to-face interviews conducted with members of USASOC and Kristin Richmond yielded the most relevant and interesting data.

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Appendix A

Insider-Defined Leadership Items

This information has been removed to allow unrestricted distribution of the research project.

Readers interested in reviewing this data should contact the author at

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Appendix B

Leadership Item Sort – Insider vs Outsider Congruence

This information has been removed to allow unrestricted distribution of the research project. Readers interested in reviewing this data should contact the author at chris.macleam@community.royalroads.ca.

ENDNOTES

ⁱ The Directorate of Army Training (DAT) issued direction on the implementation of the Army Professional Development Plan, in which a member's career is divided into five Developmental Periods (DP). DP 1 represents the stage of a member's career from civilian recruit to occupationally qualified 2Lt/A SLt. DP 2 takes them through promotion to Major/ LCdr. DP3 pertains to senior officers and is broken down into DP 3A, which addresses the requirements of officers employed in the rank of Major/LCdr, and DP 3B, which addresses the needs of officers employed in the rank of LCol/Cdr. DP 4 applies to Colonels/Capt (N) and General/Admiral officers. 360° feedback has already been trailed with the Generals, Colonels, and is now being piloted with the majors. To be coordinated into DP system, it need only be integrated, and expanded to the DP2. For more detail on the implementation of the Army DP system, see Director Army Training 4500-1 (DAT), 01 February 2002. Training Directive – Implementation of the Army Professional Development Plan.

ⁱⁱ Senge (1990) explains, “Because it’s so hard to see theories-in-use, you may need the help of another person” (p. 202). The author extrapolates this idea to the application of 360° feedback, while acknowledging that this may not be the exact context Senge had in mind.

ⁱⁱⁱ The Joint Readiness Training Center at Fort Polk, Louisiana provides a high level of training for US contingency forces under tough, realistic conditions. (Fort Polk Values, Vision and Mission. Recovered 31 October, 2001 from <http://www.jrtc-polk.army.mil/paoweb/Mediaops/Press%20Kit%2012-01.pdf>). Platoon Observers/Controllers (O/Cs) measure the performance of military units faced with realistic, scripted scenarios involving near-battle conditions, including surprise attacks, high operating tempo, and, in the case of this study, light infantry operations in wooded areas and on urban terrain (Avolio, 2001).