

**Original Article:**

**GENDER IN CHILDREN'S BOOKS WRITTEN FOR  
MILITARY FAMILIES: THE GENDERED PORTRAYAL  
OF WOMEN AND MEN, MOTHERS AND FATHERS IN  
THE CANADIAN MILITARY**

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**Abstract**

In this article, I discuss the ways in which children's literature and popular culture can be utilized in a textual analysis of organizationally produced children's books. I analyze five books that have been produced by Director Military Family Services (DMFS) for children of Canadian military members, as well as a handbook produced for military families. These books are not official policy documents, and therefore may not be initially considered as relevant to organizational analyses. However, my aim is to move beyond traditional ways of researching organizations to illuminate the gendered ways in which women and men/mothers and fathers are represented in the military. I first explore the connections between popular culture, children's literature, and the military as a gendered organization. Then, I discuss how the DMFS books are hooked into the ruling relations of the Canadian military, in particular through the ideological code of the Standard North American Family and through supposedly nonsexist approaches that actually perpetuate traditional gender norms.

**Keywords:** women in non-traditional work, family representations, children's books, military, popular culture, gender

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## INTRODUCTION

The military is a gendered institution imbued with values of violence and constrained notions of masculinity (Enloe, 2000; Winslow and Dunn, 2002; Woodward & Winter, 2006). It is often portrayed as an adventurous and exciting organization in contemporary popular culture and literature. For instance, moviegoers flock to war movies such as *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *Black Hawk Down* (2001). Tom Clancy's books about spies, terrorism, and nuclear weapons are bestsellers. This fascination with war and violence is not limited to adults, as many children's movies also have military themes, such as *Antz* (1998) and *Valiant* (2005) as do children's toys (e.g., *G.I. Joe*, weapons, tanks). These are just some examples of how militaristic thinking is embedded in and so perpetuated by popular culture, demonstrating the normalizing and acceptance of violence and hypermasculinity. The entertainment that is created and consumed in western society is an integral part of its culture. As Czarniawska (2006) states in her discussion of women in police novels, there is a "constructive role of popular culture in general, and...in the formation of actual [organizational] practices" (p. 249).

Literature and popular culture, then, can assist in extending analyses beyond what can be learned from organizational texts and policies. Rhodes (2001) asks: "Where can we look when we seek to study organizations?" (p. 374). He explains that "the common answer... would be to go to organizations themselves.... [but] organizations also exist outside of their physical locations.... [and] as representations - cultural images created as people work to understand and make sense of the institutions that saturate their lives" (p. 374). As such, I explore the representation of military family life in books created by the Canadian military's Director Military Family Services (DMFS) for family members. These books are "cultural images" produced by the organization, providing organizationally approved representations of military families. Research has been conducted using interviews with military family members (Harrison, 2002, 2006) and scrutinizing gender integration practices and policies (Winslow & Dunn, 2002), but it is difficult to observe military family life itself. Furthermore, in my extensive literature review, I found no research that had been conducted using organizational children's books as data. The books therefore offer a unique lens into the military organization.

The books that I analyze are also unique in that they do not fit into any specific genre. They are not official organizational policy documents. They are not typical of popular culture as they were not created for mass entertainment. They are not characteristic of children's literature as they were written for a very specific audience with the goal of supporting military families. I was therefore confronted with particular analytical challenges. What exactly are these books? They do not fit neatly into any of the abovementioned three categories, yet they contain aspects of each. These books were published by the organization to entertain, inform, and socialize children through the written word, using cartoon pictures and the anthropomorphizing of animals. I therefore approach my analysis using the lenses of both popular culture and children's literature as a methodological response to the unique genre of the books.

In this paper, I first discuss the interconnections between popular culture, children's books, and gendered organizations, using the conceptual frames of "associate membership of maleness" (Grey, 1998) and nonsexist sexism (Diekman & Murnen, 2004). Second, I examine the organizational context of the military, exploring the unique ways in which family is drawn into military organizational life. Third, I explain how I approached my data through the use of textual analysis using ideological codes (Smith, 1999). Fourth, I discuss the DMFS books and the stereotypical representations they perpetuate. I conclude that, although the books represent women in contradictory ways, the overall affect is the portrayal of women as less than full military members, perpetuating gendered practices and understandings in the military and in larger society.

## **GENDERED ORGANIZATIONS IN POPULAR CULTURE AND CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

Why does popular culture so often draw on gendered organizational work? Hassard and Holliday (1998) argue that "the vast majority of people work in jobs that are ultimately boring... This is incompatible with television's [and film's] love of glamour and drama. Thus, certain kinds of workplace or profession were chosen in order to maintain this dramatic interest" (p. 4). Furthermore, even though women are sometimes shown in non-traditional roles, their status as mothers and wives just as frequently determines their storylines, "return[ing] women to the home" (p. 8). By exploring gendered organizations in entertainment, a range of areas can be opened up in order to further understand gender processes. In particular, what can be learned by attending to the ways in which women are "return[ed]...to the home" in popular culture and in gendered organizations themselves?

### **Gendered Organizations, Masculinity, and Femininity**

Britton (2000) discusses the three differing ways that gendered organizations have been perceived: the bureaucratic form is "inherently gendered" (p. 420) in that it is based on hierarchical structures and relations, occupations and organizations are "gendered simply to the extent that they are male or female dominated" (p. 423), as well as "to the extent that they are ideologically and symbolically conceived in these terms by workers themselves and by culture at large" (p. 426). The military, I argue, encompasses all three of these elements. It is a hierarchical organization that is composed of more men than women and is perceived as conducting "men's" "masculine" work. Furthermore, Acker (2006) states that, in gendered organizations, "work is organized on the image of a white man who is totally dedicated to the work and who has no responsibilities for children or family demands other than earning a living" (p. 448). Although this image of a worker may include a family, it is understood that someone other than he will provide primary caregiving and unpaid work in the home, so he can focus his time and energy on paid organizational work.

Masculinity is a central point of analysis in much research about gendered organizations, where male workers are typified as the norm, with an emphasis on their masculinity. Connell (1995, 2005) discusses various dimensions of masculinity, concluding that “masculinity is, in effect, defined as non-femininity” (1995, p. 70). Traditional femininity is therefore often envisioned in contrast to hegemonic masculinity, “which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (Connell, p. 77), supporting the “division of labor, the social definition of tasks... [as] either ‘men’s work’ or ‘women’s work,’ and the definition of some kinds of work as more masculine than others” (Carrigan, Connell, & Lee, 1985, p. 594). Women, the construct of femininity, and the work women typically do are most often viewed as subordinate to men, the construct of masculinity, and the work men typically do (Acker, 2006; Hart, 2002). In gendered organizations, institutional power is enacted in ways that largely cater to the needs of so-called “abstract” (male) workers who can separate work and family, placing priority on work (Acker, 2006) with women often expected to be responsible for the home and family (Hart, 2002). This gendered notion of the male worker as the valued norm has seeped into popular culture and children’s books, propping up stereotypical representations of men and women in organizations, even as characters and storylines may appear to resist traditional notions of gender.

### **Associate Membership and Non-sexist Sexism in Popular Culture and Children’s Books**

Grey (1998) specifically analyzes children’s literature for the ways in which it can illuminate understandings of organizational representations. He states that “children’s literature has a very obvious role in social conditioning, such that the lessons learnt from childhood reading have the potential to provide an interpretative framework for later life” (p. 133). Grey’s “aim is to show how children’s literature can be analysed to show its ideological content with respect to the representation of organization” (p. 133). One point in Grey’s analysis is particularly salient to my analysis here. He discusses a female character who acts like a boy and refuses to be addressed by her given name, Georgina, preferring instead to be called George. She is “accorded a type of ‘associate membership’ of maleness” (p. 140) as she “aspires, with a degree of success, to assume a masculine role” but “in no sense constitutes a challenge to conventional gender roles” (p. 140). So while George can pretend to be a boy (which she views as better than being a girl), she is nonetheless perceived as just a girl who is trying to keep up with the boys.

Diekman and Murnen’s (2004) analysis of mid-elementary-level novels for aspects of sexism reveals a similar phenomenon. Girls are often constructed as “feminine” and boys as “masculine,” with a privileging of the latter over the former. Although some female characters are also represented in masculine ways, boys are not portrayed in feminine ways, resulting in what Diekman and Murnen (2004) term non-sexist sexism. “Non-sexist books succeeded in portraying female characters as adopting the characteristics and roles identified with the

masculine gender role, but they did not portray male characters as adopting aspects of the feminine gender role or female characters as shedding the feminine gender role" (p. 381). If girls act in feminine ways, they are devalued. If girls want to be valued, they can act in masculine ways as boys, but boys do not act in feminine ways like girls. A gendered hierarchy is established wherein the lives and activities of boys and men are privileged over those of girls and women. The goal, as exemplified by George/Georgina, is to become male.

An example of this hierarchy is found in the movie *G.I. Jane*, as evidenced by Youngs, Lisle and Zalewski's (1999) critique of the gendered ways in which the main female character (Jordan) is represented. Jordan's aim is to become a member of the US Navy Seals while attempting to avoid becoming, as her character states, a "poster girl for women's rights" (p. 479). In fact, "the major theme of the tale is the triumph of the female character *despite* her sex" (p. 476, italics in original). Jordan succeeds only by repudiating anything that marks her as a female. Ultimately, the need to protect the interests of the United States abroad supersedes gender disputes. "The questions of gender, sexuality, equality and authority are never really subject to interrogation because from the outset they are subordinated to a transcendental discourse of 'global security'" (p. 478). Initially perceived as an "enemy within" (p. 476) the Seals, Jordan is eventually accepted when she is successful in combat against a greater enemy; "killing bad Libyans" (p. 478) and saving a comrade are her keys to becoming a man.

In a related discussion of gender and military leadership, Bowring (2004) focuses on the female Captain Janeway in the Star Trek series *Voyager*. Bowring concludes that the character Janeway is stuck in stereotypical representations, portrayed as a "treacherous female" or an "obsessed masculine warrior" (p. 395) with little room for ambiguity. In addition, Janeway's "life is compartmentalized into public/private" (p. 395). She cannot have a long-term relationship because it would undermine her leadership. When she does put her personal connections first, and makes decisions based on caring relationships near the end of the series, the Janeway character becomes a "bitter old woman willing to compromise her ethics and her sense of self for purely emotional reasons, yet not courageous enough to act on her love" (p. 394). It is only in slash fiction that Janeway's love for another actually makes her stronger (Bowring, 2004). In the popular culture medium of television, she is doomed by her "feminine" emotions. Janeway can only be an associate member of military maleness; full membership eludes her because she is continually perceived as a woman in a male leadership role.

Action films, television series, and children's books, are, for the most part, designed specifically to appeal to large audiences in order to generate profit. As such, they differ from the DMFS books. Nonetheless, they are similar in the ways in which accepted notions of femininity and masculinity are constructed and portrayed. Western popular culture consumers are inundated with gendered representations wherein women must either deny their gender or conform to stereotypes. When similar representations are viewed in other media, for instance in organizational documents such as the DMFS books, it is that much less likely that the ways in which gender is portrayed will be challenged. In fact, military ruling relations can take advantage

of gendered representations in other types of media in order to “fly under the radar,” so to speak, appearing to simply replicate societal expectations of masculinity and femininity. It is more difficult to view stereotyping as such when it mirrors ubiquitous gendered representations.

Gendered representations of men and women often interact with notions relating to family roles and responsibilities. In the next section, I focus specifically on the ways in which family is implicated in the military as a gendered organization.

### **THE MILITARY AS A UNIQUE ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT: WHERE/DOES FAMILY FIT?**

Military culture is not a static entity, although it is often treated as such; instead, it can be better described as encompassing complex, changing, and often contradictory cultural practices. Nonetheless, the idea of a “military culture” supports the fact that military cultural practices are largely endemic, with militaries around the world demonstrating many of the same characteristics (Soeters, Winslow & Weibull, 2006). Specifically, military members are expected to treat the military as a way of life, not simply as a job. The three common characteristics of military culture are a “communal character of life in uniform,” a rigid “hierarchy,” and members who submit to constant “discipline and control” (p. 240).

Soeters et al. also discuss the fact that “military culture traditionally is male dominated; it is a masculine, warriorlike culture (Dunivin, 1994; Ricks, 1997)” (p. 253), which is addressed in many other works (Davis, 1997; Winslow & Dunn, 2002; Woodward & Winter, 2006). Masculinity in the gendered organization of the military is “constructed through deliberate social practice as a means of operationalizing a unique mandate - waging war” (Kovitz, 2003, p. 9) and is “correlate[ed]...with physical endurance, aggression, stoicism, and sexual athleticism” and “loyalty to one's peers” (Hockey, 2003, p. 18). Hypermasculinity, as defined by Rosen, Knudson and Fancher (2003), is a specific type of masculinity enacted in United States army units, characterized by “expressions of extreme, exaggerated, or stereotypic masculine attributes and behaviors” (p. 326), such as “exaggerated masculine values and interactions, including disrespect, insensitivity, consumption of pornography, sexualized discussions, and the encouragement of group drinking behavior” (p. 332). Hypermasculinity is not the only masculinity enacted in the military (Higate, 2003), yet it is largely privileged over other types.

Western militaries originally perceived military family members as organizational impediments (Albano, 1994). However, western militaries have gradually changed their policies to use family as a support for organizational goals. Much of the research about military families (for instance, Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000) thus uncritically focuses on how militaries can support families in order to reduce conflict between work and family, enhance combat readiness, and retain members.

Recent feminist research has begun to explore the ways in which the military as a gendered organization marginalizes military wives (Harrison, 2002, 2006) whose “wifely

femininity...is valued by military officials only insofar as it enhances military masculinity” (Enloe, 2000, p. 156). Wives in the military have traditionally been expected to volunteer to support military family programs and therefore enhance unit combat readiness (Harrison, 2002, 2006) while doing most of the work associated with raising a family, whether their husbands are on deployment or at home (Norris, 2001). I mention research that describes the difficulties that military wives may face not to suggest that all wives are marginalized, but because this research demonstrates that the lives of military families are bound up with the military as an institution and as a culture in ways that are atypical of most workplace organizations.

The research discussed here focuses on family as a military man with a civilian wife/mother. Research does exist about women in the Canadian military (Davis, 1997; Dececchi, Timperon & Dececchi, 1998; Winslow & Dunn, 2002), some of which also discusses mothers in the military (Taber, 2005; Davis, 1997) but, to date, there has been little written specifically about this latter group. Women comprise only 15 percent of the Canadian military (CBC News in Depth, 2006), and it stands to reason that the numbers of women who are mothers is smaller still, although I could find no statistics to prove or disprove this statement. There are also growing numbers of dual service households, wherein both spouses are military members.

Over the last several years, the Canadian military has made efforts to equally represent and accommodate men and women in their policies and texts. There is an equal opportunity statement on the recruiting website (Canadian Forces Recruiting, 2008) reporting that “men and women may apply for every open entry-level job” (para. 3). A Minister's Advisory Board on Gender Integration and Employment Equity was established and tabled its final report (National Defence Minister's Advisory Board, 2001) with an assessment of and recommendations for improving the treatment of women and minority military members. The military also promotes the success of specific women military members (National Defence, 2005). I have argued elsewhere (Taber, 2007, 2009) that the net effect of these policies and texts (among others), although ostensibly to support and promote women, is the representation of women as tokens and exceptions who require special treatment in order to serve with the military. As Kronsell (2005) so aptly states, “Men are soldiers, but women are female soldiers” (p. 283).

## METHODOLOGY

This article stems from my dissertation research interrogating the military as a gendered societal institution (Taber, 2007). Beginning with my own experiences as a member of a military family and as a military member, I conducted an institutional ethnography (IE) (see Taber (in press) for an in-depth discussion of my use of this methodology) to explore how ruling relations are embedded in Canadian military documents, interacting with military cultural practices, family practices, and gender practices. In this article, I focus my discussion on my textual analysis of DMFS books (second level data, in IE terms), using the lenses of popular culture and children's literature, to address the question: How do ruling relations in the military attempt to

portray military service and military family life in DMFS children's books? Smith (2005) frames her use of institutional ethnography as more than a methodology; it is a sociological theory. As such, her concepts of ruling relations and ideological codes are central to the ways in which I conceptualize my overall research, as well as to my methodology.

Ruling relations is a powerful concept that helps explore how power relations affect people's lives and their understandings. As defined by Smith (1999), the term "ruling relations" is an "internally coordinated complex of administrative, managerial, professional, and discursive organization that regulates, organizes, governs, and otherwise controls our societies" (p. 49). People interact with and are implicated in ruling relations in large part through their use and reading of texts. Smith's (1987) discussion of ruling relations and texts is worth quoting at length here:

The relations of ruling...are mediated by texts, by words, numbers, and images on paper, in computers, or on TV and movie screens.... Organizational and political processes are forms of action coordinated textually and getting done in words...images, vocabularies, concepts, abstract terms of knowledge are integral to the practice of power.... Further, the ways in which we think about ourselves and one another and about our society...are given shape and distributed by the specialized work of people in universities and schools, in television, radio and newspapers, in advertising agencies, in book publishing and other organizations forming the 'ideological apparatuses' of the society (p. 17).

My use of texts corresponds with Smith's. I explore texts as "organizational and political processes" such as military documents, "images" such as those evoked by the term *family*, and "concepts" such as the ideological code of the *Standard North American Family*. My data for this article consists of five children's books and a family handbook published by DMFS. These books, with the exception of one, are posted as links (available to the general public) on the Canadian Forces Personnel Support Agency (CFPSA) website (CFPSA, n.d.) as resources for Canadian Military Family Resource Centres (C/MFRCs). These MFRCs provide assistance to military families, particularly around issues of deployment, helping military families adjust when a parent is deployed for military operations or training. The books are "A father to be proud of" (Johnston, n.d., illustrated by Don Wong), "My mom is a soldier" (Belisle, n.d., illustrated by D. Belisle), "Joey's mom is going away" (Connolly, n.d., illustrated by P. Devine), "Student deployment journal" (Moar, n.d., illustrated by P. Devine), and "Family handbook: Military operations: Resources and information for families of Canadian Forces members" (DMFS, 2006). I also analyzed a book called "Our Griffon" (Amesbookelaar, n.d.). This book is not listed under the C/MFRC links, although it is produced by DMFS and CFPSA. It is sponsored by Bell Helicopter Textron<sup>1</sup> with a statement that the book is given to young children who visit 408 Squadron.

Although the main audience for these books is military families, it is not exclusively so. I first became aware of the books at a civilian conference for career development professionals, where, at the MFRC booth, I was given a copy of "Our Griffon." This led me to begin considering the messages the books were intended to give military family members and the general public. As far as I know, the books I analyze here are the only books produced by DMFS.

By using Smith's approach, I explore how these books are hooked into the ruling relations of the military, in particular through the ideological code of the Standard North American Family (SNAF) (Smith, 1999). An ideological code is a "schema that replicates its organization in multiple and various sites" (p. 159) and is often hidden in organizational culture, policies, and practices. In my analysis, I also draw on notions of "nonsexist" approaches (Diekman & Murnen, 2004) that perpetuate traditional gender norms and "associate membership" (Grey, 1998) as relates to children's books and popular culture. Captain Janeway in *Voyager* and Jordon in *G.I. Jane*, for instance, are associate members in that, as Hopfl (2003) states in her exploration of military culture, "women within the military culture, it seems, can either be playthings or quasi men. Either way they are dis-membered as females in order to [be] constructed/erected in relation to male members" (p. 28).

### **GENDER AND FAMILY IN MILITARY CHILDREN'S BOOKS**

"A father to be proud of" and "My mom is a soldier" are written about the authors' own families, by the daughter in the former and the mother/soldier in the latter. "A father" has an "About the Author" page (non-paginated) with the statement that the book is "based on the true story of how her father explained his absences to her and her brother Jason." Johnston's brother died in a car accident, and the page states that "this story also serves to commemorate her much loved sibling." Once I discovered that two of these books were written by authors about their own families, I was reticent to critique them as I did not want to show disrespect. Nonetheless, the choice of the Canadian military to use these particular books as resources for military families demonstrates that they are seen as appropriate materials for distribution. My analysis therefore focuses on how these books can help us to explicate gender practices within military ruling relations and does not critique the family lives of the authors.

#### **"A Father"**

"A father to be proud of" is written in the third person with pictures of the father and his children in a tank with balloons tied to it for a base birthday party; the father playing with his children; taking them to work; and, the children marching behind a military band. The children are sad to see their father leave but accept his departure after he explains the importance of his job as a peacekeeper. He explains that, "The United Nations was like an umpire. It kept people

from fighting in a war. It was keeping the peace. That was a very important job” (p. 10). The narrator states that “They would miss their father, but they were very proud of him. And when they grew up, they would be soldiers too!!” (p. 18). There are humorous pictures of the children wearing their father's uniforms, much too big for them. In this story, unlike the others, there is no discussion of who takes care of the children while the father is away. The father is portrayed as big, strong, and important, and there is no mother or other caregiver present.

### **"My Mom"**

“My mom is a soldier” is told from the point of view of Robby, the family's eldest son. It discusses the fact that the family is moving, with Robby stating “I was a little bit scared” but continues that “It would be a big adventure!” (p. 3), highlighting the advantages of living on a military base. “There is a bowling alley, a movie theatre and even McDonalds!” (p. 13). Robby says, “My mom works a lot. She goes to work almost every day” (p. 15). She makes him breakfast, but his father takes care of them when she is at work. Robby is shown playing with his father and siblings, and making cookies with his mom. His mother deploys to assist people during an ice storm. Robby says “She told me that she was going there to help, because that's what soldiers do, they help people” (p. 19). When she is away, Robby says “My Dad made supper every day. We ate a lot of pizza!” (p. 21), suggesting that his father being responsible for supper was not a typical occurrence. The story ends with Robby saying, “When I grow up I want to help people too. The police help people, and firefighters too, and so does my Mom, because my Mom is a soldier” (p. 25). There are many pictures of his mother in a uniform, with one of her at work unloading boxes from a truck.

### **“Joey's Mom”**

“Joey's mom is going away” is about a beaver family that lives in a forest. Mom goes to build a new room in Joey's aunt's house. Before Mom leaves, she “wants to make sure that everything goes well while she is gone. The children try on all their clothes to see if they still fit” (p. 7). While she is gone, “some things are different. Dad does not cook quite the same way as Mom, and things are not always put away in the right place” (p. 16). Then Dad has to leave for a few days, and Grandma takes over. She bakes cookies with the children, and does not seem to have any difficulties like Dad does. Throughout the book, Mom is seen in a long skirt with a blazer and a pink felt hat. Dad and the boys wear pants and shirts, while their sister and Grandma are in dresses. Mom is not in the military, and although she goes off to help build a house, it is perhaps seen as work that any beaver could do and is therefore not a non-traditional job: “Everyone knows that beavers are very good at building houses” (p. 4).

### **“Our Griffon”**

“Our Griffon” (non-paginated) tells the story of a personified military helicopter. Griffon has “brothers and sisters.... all members of the 408 Squadron.” In the book, Griffon is referred to as a “she” but all the squadron members pictured are men. Therefore, one must conclude that her sisters are the other helicopters and equipment and her brothers are the men who control them. She herself is oblivious to her mission until the male aircrew takes her flying and she arrives at their destination. “Griffon knew she was going to go flying that day, but where to? ...the two pilots and the flight engineer came out of the hangar.... Soon the engines were running, the blades were turning and they flew off.” In this case, the helicopter was going to rescue a (nuclear) family trapped in a flood. “On the roof of the house was a father, a mother, two little children and a dog.” When they are rescued, it is the children and the mother who are rescued first. Then, “the father carried up the dog.” The book ends stating that Griffon had had a busy day, but she was “also a very happy helicopter” (she has a smile on her “face” the entire book).

### **“Student Deployment Journal”**

The “Student deployment journal” is a longer book written for children of school age who have a parent going away on deployment. The reader learns about Alex, who relates how his family adapts to his father's absences and invites the reader to fill in various activities in the journal. Alex discusses the different phases of deployment, explaining the challenges that he and his family face, and introducing the reader to several resources, including the “Family handbook” discussed below.

The journal is ostensibly nonsexist, using the word parent in all references to the reader, but only lip service is paid to gender equity. The journal reinforces the image of a male military member (Alex's father) doing masculine work, while his wife (a stay-at-home mom) takes care of the children. Alex misses his father when he is away and sometimes wishes that he didn't have to leave, “but mostly I'm proud of my Dad being a soldier and being able to go and help other people” (p. 5). He also gets to “ride in a tank and talk on my Dad's radio” (p. 6).

Alex discusses how his parents get the family ready for deployment. “Everything, including the van has to be checked and in tip-top shape before Dad leaves” (p. 9). The man's work must be done before he leaves, so the woman can focus on the “feminine” work of caring for the children. Alex states that “what I'll miss most is *Saturday* morning when Dad and Taylor and I cook breakfast together so that Mom can either go for a run, or sleep in if *she* had to get up in the night with Taylor” (p. 12, italics added). The only day that mom does not cook breakfast is clearly on Saturday, and she is the one who gets up with the baby when he wakes at night. The father is not regularly engaged in caring for the children.

### **“Family Handbook”**

The “Family handbook” (DMFS, 2006) is intended for the spouses of military members. It has many similarities to the “Student deployment journal” and appears to have been developed in concert with it. As in the journal, the handbook has information about various supports for family members and discusses the stages of deployment. Of the 20 photographs of people, the majority is of male military members in uniform (with family members or by themselves). Women are only shown in uniform twice – once with a man in civilian clothes, and once with two children. The most prominent photograph is that of a military family with a male military member in uniform, a female spouse in a long, flowered dress, and two children (an older boy and a younger girl). The handbook appears to be written for civilian wives of male military members.

A checklist to aid families in preparing for the military members' departure is included. It details items such as “Household budget”; “mortgage/rent payment approved”; and, “arrange oil/heating for house” (DMFS, 2006, pp. 3-4). Even though the checklist is prefaced with a statement that “you may find that only some of the listed items are pertinent to your particular situation” (p. 2), it appears that it was designed for a family with a wife who is dependent on her husband and requires assistance for everyday household tasks. This contrasts with research by Norris (2001) that military wives are typically very self-sufficient as they deal with their husbands' frequent absences. The checklist here conforms with the lists in the journal, which states “everything...has to be checked...before Dad leaves. They have lists and checklists everywhere” (Moar, n.d, p. 9).

The DMFS books address issues that research shows are typically faced by children in military families, such as frequent moves and separation from a parent away for operations or training (Burrell, Adams, Durand & Castro, 2006; Martin, Rosen, & Sparacino, 2000). However, although these books show women in non-traditional work, the organization's view of “acceptable” service for women and men, mothers and fathers is reinforced.

### **NONSEXIST SEXISM AND ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

The DMFS books perpetuate ideas of what it is to be a man and a woman in the military as an organization, and in society as a whole, corresponding to Diekman and Murnen's (2004) nonsexist sexism and Grey's (1998) “associate membership of maleness” (p. 140). In two of the books (“My mom,” “Joey's mom”), women are engaged in so-called men's work, but men are not engaged in so-called women's work. Not only *can* women do it all, they *must* do it all; working outside the home does not replace providing caring work inside the home. This results in an unachievable standard by which women are evaluated. While men need only succeed at work, women must succeed at home *and* at work. In so doing, they must conform to social

expectations with respect to the division of labour and military expectations with respect to engaging in "masculine" work without challenging accepted notions of femininity.

In three of the books, women are either absent ("A father") or are mainly represented in traditional roles ("Student deployment journal," "Family handbook") while men engage in dangerous, important public work. This conforms to Smith's (1999) ideological code of the Standard North American Family (SNAF), which is a "conception of The Family as a legally married couple sharing a household. The adult male...earnings provide the economic basis of the family-household. The adult female may also earn an income, but her primary responsibility is to the care of husband, household, and children" (p. 159). Smith is careful to explain that SNAF does not represent every family, but the concept of SNAF structures how organizations and society view and act upon the idea of family. For instance, Canadian military policies and practices typically perceive families as heterosexual and traditional, even though actual family forms may be quite diverse. In "My mom," "Joey's mom," "Student deployment journal," and "Family Handbook," the families conform to the traditional norm of a heterosexual family. In "A father," there is no parent shown other than the father. In "Our Griffon," the helicopter is feminized and objectified, with the "brothers" in the family having control over "her" actions and making the decisions.

By discussing women in the military and men participating in some caring work in the home, it could be argued that these books begin to challenge SNAF, but SNAF is still present in the text and pictures. For instance, in "My mom" and "Joey's mom," the work of caring for children is presented as women's work, as moms prepare for their departure, and dads struggle with the unfamiliar role of primary caregiver. In "My mom," Robby says, "Sometimes, I wish my Mom didn't have to go to work" (p. 17). In contrast, in "A father," the narrator states, "None of their friends' fathers had to go away.... They wished their father had another job" (p. 6). Even though Robby's mom usually comes home every night, he wishes she does not have to work at all, while in "A father," the children only wish that their father does not have to go away, not that he does not have to work. In contrast, in the "Student deployment journal," there are no conflicting representations of the mother as a worker and caregiver. The family is strictly defined in stereotypical, heteronormative ways, propping up prescribed gender roles; the father is deployed while the mother, a perfect example of Enloe's "model military wife" (2000, p. 162), remains at home. In all the books, the family is "proud" of the parent military member and accepts the fact that he or she is going away for the good of others. Their jobs are important as the parent helps other people. Work comes first, the family, second. Clearly, military service is worthwhile and important; families are supposed to make requisite sacrifices.

The only parents portrayed in international roles<sup>2</sup> that are often fraught with danger and the possibility of combat are the fathers, who are deployed as peacekeepers overseas while the mothers are engaged in national domestic work. The use of the word "domestic" is particularly appropriate here. It is used in the military as a word to demonstrate that operations are local or national (not international), but is also more widely used for women's domestic work in the

home. Domestic work is viewed as relatively unimportant, and is not the "real" work of men or the military, with a focus on combat. The real (international and public) work of the military is done by men, while the support and caring (domestic and private) work is done by women.

In "Our Griffon," although it could be argued that the "real" work is done by the female helicopter, she is useless without her male crew. Griffon is personified but she has no voice, with her thoughts vetted through the narrator. The feminized Griffon is also only portrayed doing domestic work; she is not shown in a combat role. Finally, Griffon is an example of a widely accepted tradition of objectifying women in the military. Ships are referred to as "She" in speech and in written reports. There is an odd sort of reverence in this use of a feminine pronoun, which is capitalized when written. Military members generally respect their equipment, yet they also stroke it, cajole it, and control it. The equipment is subservient and of little use without the (mostly male) military members. "Our Griffon" is an epitomic illustration of this dynamic.

The "Family handbook" solidifies the representations of family and the typical military members that are seen in the other books. It is no coincidence that the themes in the children's books match those in the handbook. They reflect ruling relations wherein women are portrayed as dependent family members and men are independent military members. This book, unlike the others, has an audience of adults, not children, and is purportedly intended to give direct support to military spouses. However, its real purpose could be argued to be to assist the military in achieving its goals. It states that "Their [military members] ability to fulfill their role is immeasurably strengthened by the support of a strong and resilient family at home" (v). The organizational mandate takes precedence.

## IMPLICATIONS

The DMFS books represent military family life in complex ways, connecting to representations in popular culture and children's literature while not mirroring them. For instance, although in popular culture war is often glamourized, in the children's books the opposite is emphasized. In "A father," the tank has balloons tied to it. Instead of being an instrument of death, it is portrayed as a toy. This representation demonstrates the military's attempt to characterize military service as benign. In "My mom," "Joey's mom," and "Our Griffon," the military does re/construction work. Combat is not even peripherally introduced. This is hardly surprising, as the books have been written for children by an organization that evidently wants them to accept and support their parents' work. The juxtaposition of the books with popular culture stems from organizational goals. The goal of the film industry, for instance, is to use exciting venues to boost ticket sales. The end goal of militaries, as Harrison (2002, 2006) argues, is to prepare for and engage in combat. Therefore, these children's books can be a way of boosting support for the military by "camouflaging" its goal. While the MFRCs have an authentic aim to support military families, the use of these books supports a status quo that privileges military action and marginalizes women.

The complexity of the ways in which the DMFS books are connected to popular culture and children's literature illuminates the broader discourse of gender in the Canadian military and society. Gendered organizations, like western militaries, are not monolithic. They encompass contradictory policies and practices. Gender integration policies, for instance, attempt to provide equity for women. At the same time, they point to women as exceptions and as requiring special accommodations that men do not require (Taber, 2007, 2009). Movies such as *GI Jane* and television shows such as *Voyager* represent women as successful military members only when they act as stereotypical men. DMFS children's books are gender equitable in that they portray women as military members, but their service is represented in ways that conform to traditional ideals of women's work. Women are associate members only. The ideological code of SNAF continues to have a "peculiar and important political force, carrying forward modes of representing the world even among those who overtly resist the representations they generate" (Smith, 1999, p. 171). As Fenwick (2004) discusses, women and girls are encouraged to seek out non-traditional work, but are still expected to juggle home and family.

In fact, these representations can arguably conceal discriminatory practices. For instance, Enloe (2000) critiques the ways in which the military uses women for its own ends. "Most government policy makers have wanted to use women as soldiers only in those ways that simultaneously would serve the military's own operational goals and sustain the culture of militarized masculinity....to perpetuat[e] a respectable brand of femininity" (p. 263). The non-sexist sexism in the DMFS books works in exactly this way, portraying women as working in non-traditional roles but nonetheless engaged in proper femininity in contrast to the proper masculinity of men. As Davis (1997) states in relation to her research exploring why women leave the Canadian military: "Despite policy 'laundering,' the workplace itself, however, continues to operate around ideologies of 'men's work,' and women therefore remain the sexualized 'other' in the environment" (p. 194).

It is notable that, although the final report of the Minister's Advisory Board on Gender Integration and Employment Equity (National Defence Minister's Advisory Board, 2001) gives the military's employment equity plan a passing grade overall, it fails the military on its ability to recruit and retain women and minorities and to change its hostile culture towards these groups. Women continue to be othered and excluded. If the Jordan character in the movie *G.I. Jane* had to "dis-member" herself (to use Hopfl's concept) in order to be accepted, the female characters in the DMFS books are not dis-membered (they are represented in traditional feminine ways) precisely because they are *not* accepted. They are tolerated only, and set apart as different from a "typical" soldier.

The books also celebrate the military, going so far as to show the children following in their military parent's footsteps. The families accept the unique challenges that they will face as military families, and their needs are subsumed to those of the military, because of its important work. There is a distinct lack of research about the processes by which children of military members may be influenced to support and/or later join the military. I found only one article

focusing on the military family as socialization for future service, written 28 years ago (Faris, 1981). Faris discusses the fact that “family linkages between one generation and the next...help account for the recruitment of high quality personnel. Without such occupational inheritance, the [American] All-Volunteer Force would have even greater difficulty in obtaining personnel” (p. 545). Children from military families are more likely to join the military due to a “greater familiarity with military life, a stronger attachment to the value of entering the military...and the view of the military as an honorable calling” (p. 557). With this information in mind, the DMFS books can be viewed in a much more sinister light, as representations that may work to socialize and recruit military family members while they are still children.

The DMFS books are infused with elements found in popular culture and children's literature that tend to normalize war and encourage patriotism; represent girls as passive and women as wives, victims, or token soldiers; and, portray men as warrior protectors. Zipes's (1994) research on the gendered nature of fairy tales and their importance for illuminating life links to the content in the DMFS books. “We refer to myths and fairy tales as lies by saying, ‘oh, that's just a fairy tale,’ or ‘that's just myth.’... [but] consciously and unconsciously we weave the narratives of myth and folk tale into our daily existence” (p. 4). In the case of the DMFS books, they are clearly more than “just” children's books. They can be considered an educational tool used in an attempt to socialize children into a “daily existence” that supports military practices and policies. Zipes' (1994) argument that fairy tales work to normalize particular representations is particularly applicable. He states that the “classical fairy tale makes it appear that we are all part of a universal community with shared values and norms” (p. 5). He connects his argument to patriotism, further stating that “we need only have faith and believe in the classical fairy tale, just as we are expected to have faith and believe in the American flag” (p. 5). The DMFS books, I argue, encourage faith in the military, patriotism, and acceptance of family representations. They differ from fairy tales as they do not stress a “universal community,” but instead a very particular military community, functioning at organizational and familial levels instead of a societal one. Nonetheless, they are similar in their attempts at socialization and normalization.

Whether the authors, and by extension ruling relations in the organization that approved and distributed the books, have included gendered and militarized representations consciously or unconsciously, the result is the same. War is portrayed in various ways as important and heroic (with the focus of peacekeeping in several of the books), fun (such as children in the books playing with tanks as “toys” and the animated children's movie *Valiant*) and glorified (for instance, the movie *Black Hawk Down*). Turse (2008) discusses how this latter movie was given military resources in its production: “At the movies, the military [often becomes involved to ensure that the organization] gets sold as heroic, admirable, and morally correct” (p. 111) in order to garner public support and generate new recruits. What ties these various representations together is the acceptance of war, catered for specific audiences, which is used by military ruling relations to further socialize military families and the public into supporting its organizational

goals while recruiting new members. This is not to say that movies and books are always accepted uncritically but that there is a common ideological thread that works to normalize military service and perpetuate constrained notions of masculinity and femininity.

In this article, I have used the media of popular culture and children's books to assist in my analysis of documents distributed to military families. My research demonstrates that organizations do indeed have "reach," as Rhodes (2001) argues, "outside of their physical locations" (p. 374). In order to bring this reach into the analysis, researchers must look outside organizations themselves, beyond policy documents and organizational practices. Organizations market themselves not just through direct public relations exercises, but in the unofficial artefacts they produce for their members and members' families. I have focused on the Canadian military, but similar documents may exist in other organizations. These documents, when analyzed in conjunction with other media such as popular culture, can offer a unique lens into the ruling relations of organizations. If popular culture plays a role "in the formation of actual [organizational] practices" (Czarniawska, 2006, p. 249) then, by focusing analytical lenses on the ways in which popular culture and organizations interconnect, analyses can be extended in new directions to strengthen a societal critique.

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#### **Footnotes:**

1. Bell Helicopter Textron is the company that produces the CH-146 Bell helicopter, otherwise known as "Griffon" by Canadian military members.
2. There is mention of a peripheral character in "Student deployment journal," the mother of one of Alex's friends, who deploys overseas. Space does not allow for a detailed analysis of this character here, but I have argued elsewhere (Taber, 2007) that she is represented in ways similar to the mothers in "My mom" and "Joey's mom."

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