# *Organizational Influence on Individual Perceptions: The social representations of the Aboriginal military in the Canadian Armed Forces*[1]

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The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established as a result of the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement, representing the culmination of the largest class action brought by Aboriginal residential school survivors against the federal government. In volume 6 of its final report, the Commission directly calls on the federal government to adopt the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Section 5 of the Declaration expressly recognizes the right of Indigenous peoples to participate fully in the social and cultural life of the State. Similarly, section 15 emphasizes the obligation of signatory governments to combat prejudice, eliminate discrimination and promote tolerance and good relations between Indigenous peoples and any other component of society (UN, 2007). The Department of National Defence is composed of the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) and civilian employees. It is largest employer in the federal public service, hiring more than 97, 000 military

personnel and 24,000 civil employees in 2017 (Canada, 2017a). In this context, the issue of the under-representation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian military is an urgent and real concern for the federal government.

This preliminary study aims to understand this under-representation by exploring military perceptions of Aboriginal people as an explanatory variable. To do this, we present the problem, define the research object and the research questions, describe the methodology used, present our data, and analyze our results.

## Problem and Definition of the Research Object

In Canada, the term Aboriginal refers to the first occupants of North America and their descendants. Under section 35 of the Constitution Act of 1982, this term includes three distinct groups: First Nations, Inuit and Métis. In Canada, the Aboriginal population represented 1.7 million in 2016, which made up about 4.9% of the total Canadian population (Canada, 2017c). This is the fastest growing segment of the population. Between 1996 and 2006, the non-Aboriginal population increased by 8%, while the Aboriginal population grew by 45% (Canada, 2006). Despite this impressive growth, Aboriginal people remain under-represented in the labour market, with only 66% of off-reserve 25–54 year-old members employed, while on reserve only 52% are employed for the same segment of this population (Bruce and Marlin, 2012).

This under-representation is also observed in the Canadian Armed Forces, where Aboriginal peoples represent only 2.6% of employees, whereas under the Employment Equity Act, they should represent 3.3% of the Canadian Armed Forces workforce (Canada, 2016). The principle of employment equity refers to the notion of legitimacy, a necessary principle in a democratic society. In other words, public organizations should represent the demographic trends of the population they serve (Scoppio, 2009). The Canadian Armed Forces are no exception to this principle. However, military organizations have an organizational structure distinct from other public organizations, with a chain of command, linear planning and a culture that can be described as closed. As a result, these organizations are less open to change, including the integration of employment equity into the culture of the Canadian Armed Forces. However, we have noticed an improvement in this regard in recent years (Scoppio, 2010). We therefore

believe it is relevant to explore military perceptions of Aboriginal people because they can facilitate or hinder the integration of Aboriginal people into the Canadian Armed Forces. But, in this preliminary study, we will first try to understand the representation scheme. We thus aim to answer the following questions:

- What are the social representations of Canadian Armed Forces members towards Aboriginal people?
    - What elements constitute the central core of the representation system? Does the fact that members belong to the non-commissioned members' group or officers' group have an influence on their attitude and, if so, which one?
    - What elements constitute the periphery of the representation system? What are the attitudes, understood as opinions and stereotypes, of Canadian military personnel towards Aboriginal people?

**Theoretical framework**

Our study is based on Moscovici's (1961) theory of social representations. This theory argues that our way of perceiving our environment is influenced by multiple considerations that determine our socio-cognitive universe. In doing so, we aim to describe an outcome, the perception of an object by a subject. However, the construction of a perceptual schema is also an iterative process of construction (Abric, 1987). The individual thus builds a meaning to his social reality (Tafani, Haguel and Ménager, 2007).

Durkheim is the first author to focus on what he calls collective representations. According to him, collective representations function autonomously, like a meta-system. Durkheim was mainly interested in so-called traditional societies where social facts are of primary importance. In this sense, these perceptions have the function of preserving the sustainability of the group and are only relevant in societies where individuals comply very strongly with the rules of their group (Valencia, 2010). Moscovici notes a major gap in this theory, namely the lack of consideration of the individual in the analysis of social facts. Indeed, in his theory of social representations, Moscovici wants to capture the interaction between the individual and the group. To do

this, Moscovici develops two conceptual tools: objectification and anchoring (Moscovici, 1961).

Objectification is a process by which members of a group develop a minimal knowledge of a given object. These are the foundations of representations. Negura and Lavoie argue that this process is the result of a selective synthesis of information about an object, activated by a socio-cognitive mechanism (Negura and Lavoie, 2016). This mechanism is articulated by three components, namely selection or selective deconstruction, the formation of a figurative scheme and naturalization. In selection, the individual decontextualizes information about the object and appropriates certain elements in a universe of his own (Seca 2010; Valencia 2010). The anchoring process is an extension of objectification. The individual inserts the new object of representation into his system, constantly fed by his interactions with individuals and groups. According to Tafani, Haguel and Ménager (2007), anchoring allows the object in question to be embedded in pre-existing symbolic and social relationships.

Social representations are useful in that they make it possible to deduce an implicit register from which the representations are linked. Individuals within a group draw their mutual understanding largely from social representations. For example, for hunters, the notion of nature protection refers to a land management issue that will ultimately ensure the sustainability of their activity. Environmentalists will not have the same understanding of this term. For them, nature protection refers more to an ideal of inherent value. Social representations will also serve as guidelines of actions for a given group. These representations will be normative in nature, since they will create expectations. In addition, these representations play a differentiating role, in that they make it possible to maintain identity within a group. The group is aware of its identity by building a representation that is exclusive to it (Lo Monaco, L'heureux, 2007). Moscovici even argues that the physical representation of a group (e.g., a church) is less important than the position it takes as a result of a representation (e.g., opposition to abortion).

Several schools of thought emerge from this theory initially developed by Moscovici. In the next section, we discuss the two main theories characterizing social representations. These are the theory of the central core, also called the Aachen School, as well as the theory of organizing principles, also known as the Geneva School. We

will briefly discuss: the convergence of both theories, the theory of construct levels and the anthropological and cultural approach.

*Theory of the Central Core*

The theory of the central core stems from Abric's work (1987). The latter analyses the structure of social representations in two parts with distinct but complementary functions. This theory is based on the idea that any representation revolves around a nucleus composed of elements that form the core of the representation. Moscovici argues that our rationality standard for our decisions is based on the nature of the group and the content of a representation. The individual makes decisions within the limits defined by language, institutions and social representations (Moscovici, 2013). By adopting the perspective of the central core theory, it is methodologically necessary to identify the elements of representation that constitute the essence of the core (Dany and Apostolodis, 2007).

The core has three fundamental functions: a generating function, an organizing function and a stabilizing function. The generating function gives meaning to representation, allowing the creation or transformation of the meaning of representation (Moliner, 2016). The organizational function allows the elements to be arranged together. It determines the nature and intensity of the links forming the representation (Abric, 2003; Moliner, 2016). Abric argues that this characteristic unifies and stabilizes representation (Abric, 2003). Negura and Maranda describe the stabilization function as allowing the representation to persist over time. This is the essential property of the central core (Negura, Maranda, 2004). Moreover, the central core is so important that a questioning of one of its elements has the effect of leading to either a radical modification or rejection of the representation by the subject (Flament and Rouquette, 2003; Moliner, 2016). The core is not only the reproduction of the individual's belief and value system, but also deeply reflects the social norms of the environment (Bingono, 2011). The central core is intimately linked to another structure, the peripheral system. The latter has the effect of individualizing representation by inferring the specific elements of perceptions (Bingono, 2011).

Three specific functions drive the peripheral system: adaptation to concrete reality, content diversification, and protection of the central core (Seca, 2010). Zouhri and Rateau argue that this system is prescriptive and conditional, adapting the group's practices to the concrete reality of their audience (Zouhri and Rateau, 2015). Thus, thanks to the peripheral system, individuals in a group sharing the same representation will be able to use analogies and examples to illustrate a concept. It is then possible to obtain the attention of an audience by drawing from familiar elements, thus conforming to the expectations of the audience, without altering the elements of the central core (Seca, 2010). The peripheral system also has a role called "amortisseur", which makes representation flexible and permeable to the immediate context as well as evolving (Flament, 2003; Bingono, 2011). Indeed, it is about a regulating valve that supports dissension and contradictions within a group and between the elements of representation (Bingono, 2011).

Finally, the peripheral system defends the non-negotiable elements of the central core. The literature proposes the analogy of a "bumper" capable of absorbing impacts preventively. Seca states that it absorbs the unspeakable, the unjustifiable, the new without damaging the heart of the socio-cognitive system. It thus favours the maintenance of what is non-negotiable or unconditional (Seca, 2010, p. 83). In this study, we notice that the central core and the peripheral system shape a set of communicating vessels. The structuring framework of this theory allows us to clearly explain the form of the perceptual pattern that Aboriginal soldiers have.

*Theory of Organizing Principles*

The second theoretical current animating the paradigm of social representations, the theory of organizing principles, aims to bring together the opinions of different groups. Opinions are perceived as the set of attitudes, beliefs or prejudices conveyed by members of a group. Valence explains that this theory differs from the central core theory because it does not fit into a descriptive posture of social representations. Rather, it is a question of placing perceptions in the field of social relations by detecting the heterogeneity of representational dynamics (Valence, 2010). This highlights the anchoring process, unlike the central core theory which focuses mainly on the

objectification process (Roussieau and Renard, 2003). Doise seeks to establish the principles that generate position-taking, defined by different value systems and norms that form the basis for the expression of opinions. Doise also states that the system of social representations has two functions: it generates positions and organizes individual differences. In this sense, the notion of attitude is at the heart of this theory, understood as opinions, attitudes, and stereotypes (Doise, 2003). In addition, Doise has developed a continuum to capture the levels of analysis of individuals' reality, depending on whether these glasses are part of an individual (inter-individual) or collective (ultra-collective) dynamic – that is, whether they are motivated by the individual or by the group. However, Doise makes it clear that there is no simple causality between the individual's membership in a group and the formation of his opinion. This influence is rather variable in geometry. Some groups will have more influence than others on the formation of individual opinions and beliefs. From this perspective, we can, for example, understand power or domination relationships within a social class or categories within a field, such as culture or work or gender inequalities (Seca, 2010). Within a group, there may be subgroups of belonging that will also have an impact on the construction of individual social representations. The personal characteristics of individuals, their status, position and the general social context also contribute to colouring the process of social representation (De Carlos, 2015).

*Subsequent Developments*

Negura and Maranda (2004) developed a dual approach, drawing on both the theory of organizing principles and the central core. There are common points that unite these two theories, for example the existence of a representational field of shared knowledge that takes the form of the central core and the peripheral system for the central core theory, on the one hand, and the formation of organizing principles on the other hand. While the central core theory places more emphasis on group consensus on the meaning of a social object, the theory of organizing principles has the judgment and evaluation of a prominent statement to analyze differences in members' positions (Tremblay, 2005). The use of both theories allows the authors to overcome the difficulties associated with either approach. Indeed, the central core theory is too descriptive, while it is necessary to have an explanatory dimension to grasp all the

nuances of a subject's perception scheme. The theory of organizing principles makes it possible to bring this additional dimension by highlighting the dynamics of social representations in their relational anchoring (Tremblay, 2005).

*Application of the Theoretical Framework to the Research Subject*

In our research, we will use the theory of the central core and the theory of organizing principles to analyze Aboriginal integration in the Canadian military. The work of Negura and Maranda (2004) serves as a foundation for our research, which attempts to study the influence of the military's professional home group (i.e. whether they are non-commissioned members or officers[2]) on their perceptions of Aboriginal people.

**Methodological Framework**

To answer our research questions, we use a constructivist posture that is based on the premise that individuals give meaning to the objects with which they interact. Through constructivist research, the researcher relies as much as possible on the point of view of the subjects to build meaning through the perceptions of the research participants. The case study is particularly appropriate here as it provides an ideal model for describing and understanding in depth a complex case or a limited number of cases, which is consistent with the search for an understanding of social representations.

To conduct our research, we collected our data using a non-probabilistic method (called "snowball") to recruit respondents to a 28-question questionnaire. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. One part of this tool is divided into "Likert scale" answer choices and the other part is made up of multiple statements. The non-probability method is ideal when we are unable to gather all the respondents in an exhaustive and pre-established list (Fortin, 2010). For our purposes, the network sampling method was preferred. We proceeded by selecting a few candidates who met

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[2] Officers plan operations while non-commissioned members carry them out.

our selection criteria, and they then referred us to other potential candidates who still met these same criteria. Thus, this process was repeated until data saturation was reached (Depelteau, 2000). This type of sampling does not allow us to generalize our conclusions, but to deepen our research problem from an exploratory perspective.
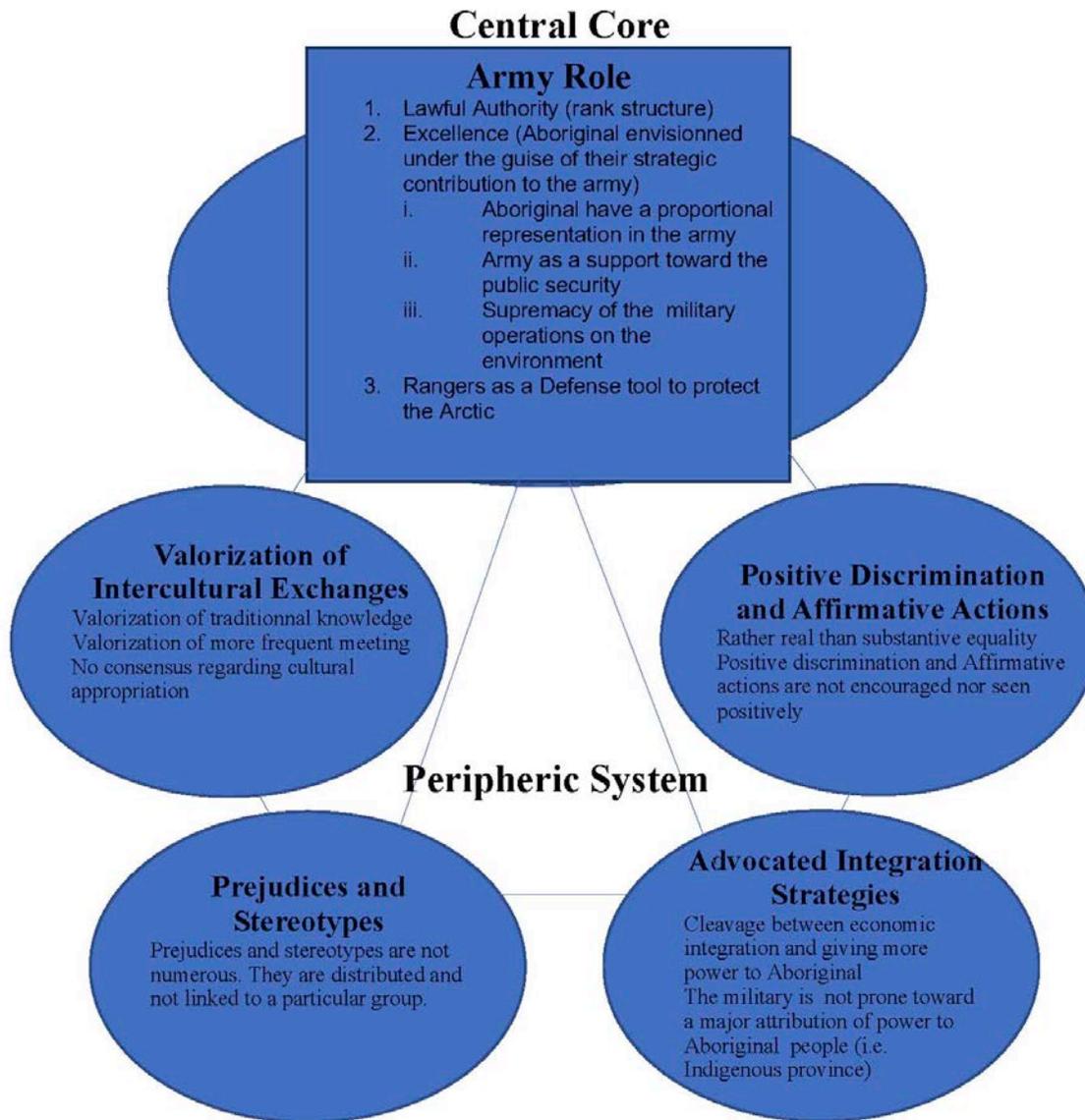
The use of this method is justified by the hermetic nature of the Canadian Armed Forces. Two steps guided our data collection process. First, we knew the supervisors of a few organizations, which allowed us to access a significant pool of respondents. In particular, we contacted the commanding officer of the 2nd Canadian Ranger Patrol Group (2 CRPG), based in Quebec, to obtain the point of view of the soldiers within his unit who had worked with Aboriginal people. In addition, the commander of the Royal 22e Régiment unit was contacted, as he was the principal investigator's immediate supervisor during the data collection procedure. It was imperative to obtain the approval of the 34th Brigade Group, a military organization covering the entire Montreal area, to initiate our data collection procedure. [3] After obtaining the commander's consent, the researcher went to 2 CRPG headquarters to distribute his questionnaire. Similarly, the questionnaire was hosted on the Google Sheet site to facilitate access to the principal researcher's entire contact network. A total of 72 military personnel responded to the questionnaire.

## Presentation of the Results and Discussion

We present our results using a graph showing the structure of the social representations of the object "Aboriginal" for the members of the Canadian Armed Forces (Figure 1). In this graph, each section corresponds to the question categories of our questionnaire.

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[3] The 34th Brigade Group exercises authority over fifteen reserve units, nine of which are located the Montreal area (Canada, 2017a).

**Figure 1: SR System of the Military (subject) Toward Indigenous People (object) According to the Central Core Theory**



First, we see the central role of the Canadian Armed Forces as a pillar of social representation. They are the lens through which the military perceives Aboriginal people. Seca argues that these elements form a basis for communication on which to lay the judgment and communication of the military (Seca, 2010). The central core is divided into two central elements, legal authority (rank structure) and excellence,

understood as the strategic contribution of Aboriginal people to the military. On the one hand, respect for legal authority is inherent in the *National Defence Act* (section 18). The response pattern of the questionnaire showed that the rank structure has the effect of surpassing any ethnic consideration. The *Defence Ethics Statement*, a flagship document outlining the minimum standards of behaviour expected of soldiers, includes three guiding principles. It is about respecting the dignity of every person, serving Canada before oneself and obeying and supporting the rule of law. Some more specific values are formulated, such as loyalty. According to this principle, members of the Canadian Armed Forces must "loyally carrying out the lawful decisions of their leaders and supporting ministers in their accountability to Parliament and Canadians" (Canada, 2017b).

When asked whether the military would respect the authority of an Aboriginal person holding the position of Minister of Defence, all military personnel responded positively. This was confirmed by the fact that 91% of respondents stated that the only acceptable reason for refusing to respect an Aboriginal person's authority would be that he or she does not have the position or rank to exercise such authority. We note that this analysis is consistent with the literature on the testimonies of Aboriginal people who served in operational theatre, both in Canada and Australia. Indeed, the majority of them stated that they were treated equally by their non-Aboriginal colleagues (McFarlane and Moses, 2005; Riseman, 2014; Canada, 1996).

On the other hand, the military views Aboriginal people in terms of excellence. This is another important aspect of the core and is also an integral part of the *Statement of Defence Ethics*. Under this principle, the military must prove to be "Continually improving the quality of policies, programmes and services they provide to Canadians and other parts of the public sector; Fostering or contributing to a work environment that promotes teamwork, learning and innovation; [and] Providing fair, timely, efficient and effective services that respect Canada's official languages" (Canada, 2017).

We find that operational factors are predominant in the perception of Aboriginal people within the Canadian Armed Forces. Although respondents expressed sensitivity to political and environmental factors, operational factors take precedence over these considerations. For example, the Canadian Rangers unit (see also the articles by Lackenbauer and Vullièrme in this special issue) is perceived as being used to defend

the Far North rather than as an Aboriginal integration structure. Similarly, the military is convinced that Aboriginal people are adequately represented in the army through the Rangers. These elements demonstrate that the military perceives Aboriginal people in terms of their strategic contribution to the Canadian Armed Forces. The central core strongly governs the other elements of social representation. As Moliner (2016) argues, this structure gives meaning and modulates the other elements of representation. The central core also determines the intensity of the links, assessing the strength of the consensus reached by the other elements. For example, the value of cultural exchanges and the negative perception of affirmative action programs by the majority of military personnel generated more agreement among respondents than the expression of prejudices and stereotypes. We can therefore see that the central core has a more intense link with the first two elements. The organizational function of this element is fundamental. Negura and Maranda (2004) argue in this sense that it is this capacity that sustains representation over time. The organizational culture of the military (e.g., chain of command, planning and linear operational procedure) promotes this aspect of social representation *a fortiori*.

The peripheral system is the second component of social representation, serving three specific functions: adaptation to concrete reality, diversification of the content of social representation, and protection of the central core (Seca, 2010). This component makes it possible to individualize social representation, and it hosts heterogeneity by allowing divergences. In this case, the peripheral system comprises five subsets: the valuation of intercultural exchanges, the perception of positive discrimination, the recommended integration strategies, and prejudices and stereotypes.

First, the valorizing of intercultural exchanges is the part of the social representation system with which respondents agree most strongly. Eighty percent of respondents disagree with the statement that Europeans have had a positive effect on Aboriginal people. Eighty-two percent of respondents also disagree that it is difficult for non-Aboriginal people to have relationships with Aboriginal people because of their overwhelming social problems. Furthermore, 85% of respondents support the inclusion of specific training between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. In addition, 81% perceive Aboriginal traditional knowledge as useful or very useful. Also, 90% of respondents believe that Aboriginal people should be exposed to the non-Aboriginal

population more often. Finally, the perception of cultural appropriation is the most divisive issue among respondents. Indeed, 44% of them stated that it was not necessary to ask Aboriginal people for permission to use their symbol, while 19% believe that in the context of a major event it is necessary but not in the context of a small event. 40% understand that it is necessary to ask permission from Aboriginal people each time such a symbol is used.

Second, respondents diverge on the issue of positive discrimination. Overall, 68% of respondents oppose different recruitment standards for Aboriginal people. In addition, 83% of Aboriginal people say that if they want to move into senior management occupations or positions, they can do so if they take steps to ensure their personal success. However, 53% of respondents agree that Aboriginal people should receive benefits based on their ethnic origin to address any disadvantages they may have experienced. On the surface, these two results seem contradictory. Indeed, more exploration should be done to discern the reasons why military personnel express themselves against different recruitment standards for Aboriginal people, but are in favor of implementing benefits based on their ethnic origin.

Third, with respect to the integration strategies advocated by respondents, 67% of respondents acknowledge that the term "Indian" no longer exists to promote the emergence of a single Canadian nation. However, 90% of respondents disagree with the fact that Aboriginal people are abandoning their language so that they can become full Canadian citizens. In this sense, we note a significant disagreement as to whether Aboriginal people should be fully assimilated. Indeed, 43% of respondents believe that Aboriginal people should not be assimilated, but that they should be given more power so that they can develop fully. However, 47% of respondents believe that Aboriginal people should not be forced to assimilate, but that economic incentives should be created to promote their integration. Only 6% of respondents favour of an assimilation policy. Finally, 57% of respondents oppose the creation of a specific level of government for Aboriginal people. Twenty-eight percent support the creation of such a level of government, while 15% believe that Aboriginal people have been historically favoured and that the creation of such a level of government is unnecessary. There are currently no surveys available that would allow us to compare these latter data with the opinions of the general Canadian population.

Fourth, with respect to prejudice and stereotyping, 62% of respondents do not believe that Aboriginal people are naturally inclined to have certain social problems or addictions. On the other hand, 77% of them believe that Aboriginal people are not a danger to public safety because of the higher crime rate on reserves. When respondents were asked to comment on the causes of underdevelopment in Aboriginal communities, 42% felt that the main causes of underdevelopment were residential schools and the historical system of oppression. Moreover, 27% believe that mismanagement of band councils is responsible for communities' underdevelopment, while 18% believe that Aboriginal cultural traits are the main factor, and 13% of respondents believe that the federal government sends too much money to band councils, which undermines their development. In short, we note that respondents are divided on the issue of prejudice and stereotypes. Although the majority of respondents disagree with statements involving prejudice and stereotyping, we note that a significant proportion of our respondents have such ideas. As such, it is part of the peripheral system.

These results indicate a tension between the enhancement of Indigenous culture and the implementation of differential treatment for Indigenous peoples. The multicultural nature of the Canadian Armed Forces—an official policy of the federal government since 1971 and enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms since 1982—seems to influence the fact that military members consider the enhancement of cultural contributions compatible with the achievement of operational objectives. For this reason, a majority of Aboriginal people agreed with the inclusion of mandatory Aboriginal curriculum. However, there is a tension between the rank structure, on the one hand, and the new concept of equity and diversity on the other. Scoppio explains that the old concept of equality referred rather to treating everyone equally, while the new concept advocates the principle of treatment based on the legitimate needs of an individual or group of individuals (Scoppio, 2007). This approach supports the adoption of affirmative action programs to increase the representation of minorities in public organizations. Thus, substantive equality is more reconcilable with the elements of the central core (rank structure and excellence). For example, we could easily see a member of the Canadian Armed Forces adapting to his or her audience by stating that any individual with the necessary skills can reach a higher rank which, consequently, makes measures of access to equality not necessary.

There are some nuances to this reasoning. Although the majority of respondents' opinions correspond mainly to formal equality, a significant proportion of them support an approach based on substantive equality. As such, respondents are divided into two groups. Nevertheless, membership in one of these two groups does not change respondents' perception of other components of the peripheral system. Proponents of formal or substantive equality value cultural exchanges as much as they do, and they maintain prejudices and stereotypes in similar proportions. In this sense, the peripheral system processes and regulates heterogeneity (Bingono, 2011). The peripheral system acts as a buffer of the representation, sorting the elements, so that they remain coherent with the central core (Flament and Rouquette, 2003; Valence, 2010). The heterogeneity of the peripheral system is also noticeable in terms of prejudices and stereotypes. Indeed, even if respondents generally disagree with statements containing prejudices and stereotypes, preconceived ideas about the factors that contribute to the underdevelopment of Indigenous communities are well established. Historically, federal public servants have been guided by their prejudices and stereotypes in the application of their discretion (McGowan, 2011). The Canadian Armed Forces do not appear to have been immune to this phenomenon.

The disagreement between those who support substantive equality and those who support formal equality may signify the evolution of the peripheral system. While the federal government is focusing on equal access measures in its new defence policy, it would be interesting to examine the changing perception of the military in this regard. Indeed, the Canadian Armed Forces do not operate in isolation and operate in synergy with the society in which it is embedded (English, 2004).

**Conclusion**

The purpose of our study was to understand Canadian Armed Forces' members' perceptions of Aboriginal people. To do this, we based our analysis on the theory of social representations, focusing more specifically on the theory of the core central. More specifically, we sought to answer our main research question through four sub-questions. Thus, to the question, "What are the elements that constitute the central core of the representation system?" the military respondents indicated legal authority and

excellence. In other words, they perceive Aboriginal people according to a filter that prioritizes the rank they hold and their strategic contribution. To the question, "What are the elements that constitute the periphery of the representation system?" our analysis shows that this peripheral system includes the enhancement of cultural exchanges, affirmative action programs, recommended integration strategies, and prejudices and stereotypes. Respondents are open to cultural exchanges but they are divided on the use of affirmative action programs, with the majority of respondents advocating formal equality rather than substantive equality. There was no majority opinion expressed on the recommended integration methods.

When we ask, "What are the attitudes, understood as opinions and stereotypes, of Canadian military personnel towards Aboriginal peoples?" we can say that there are prejudices and stereotypes, but in a tenuous way. More specifically, the inconsistency in the response pattern regarding integration strategies—i.e., a topical discontinuity between respondents advocating economic integration, empowerment and their prejudices and stereotypes—leads us to believe that these prejudices and stereotypes seem to owe more to a poor knowledge of Aboriginal issues and realities than to a value system in which these elements are entrenched.

Finally, as to whether respondents' membership in the non-commissioned member or officer group influences their attitude, the results of our cross tabulation analyses did not show any significant association between the results of the response analysis and belonging to one category or another. It therefore appears that these categories have no influence on military attitudes towards Aboriginal people. However, we must be cautious here. Since this was only a preliminary study, our sample was not very large. These examinations should therefore be repeated with a larger and more representative sample to answer this question.

In summary, our study suggests that the perceptual scheme does not explicitly undermine the integration of Aboriginal people into the Canadian Armed Forces. However, the presence of prejudice and stereotypes is a barrier that could affect the application of military discretion and ultimately hinder the integration of Aboriginal people. For the time being, this preliminary study provides an initial picture of the situation and shows that further research is needed.

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