



# Gendered Experience of Operational Deployment

Andrea Brown, PhD  
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**HEALTH SCIENCES**  
Psychiatry & Behavioural  
Neurosciences



CANADIAN  
**MST CoP**  
MILITARY SEXUAL TRAUMA  
COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

## ***Land Acknowledgement***

*McMaster University recognizes and acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee nations, and within the lands protected by the “Dish with One Spoon” wampum agreement.*



# Project Team

Lcol (Ret'd) Alex Heber, MD FRCPC

LCdr (Ret'd) Rosemary Park

Margaret McKinnon, PhD, CPsych

Ruth Lanius, MD, PhD

Heather Millman, MA

Kim Ritchie, PhD

Sarah Lade, PhD(c)

Special advisor:

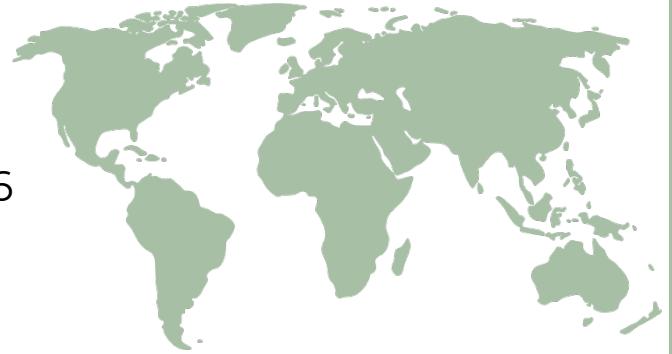
Karen Davis, PhD

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# Background

- CAF is committed to attracting, recruiting and retaining more women
- Aim to have 25% representation by 2026
- Women's deployment experiences not well known
- NOT a study on SM



# Demographics

## Force

Army – 7; Navy – 2;  
Air Force - 5

## Branch of Service

Regular Forces = 14  
Reserves = 8

## Highest Rank

Senior Officer = 9

## Service Years

1980s - 2021

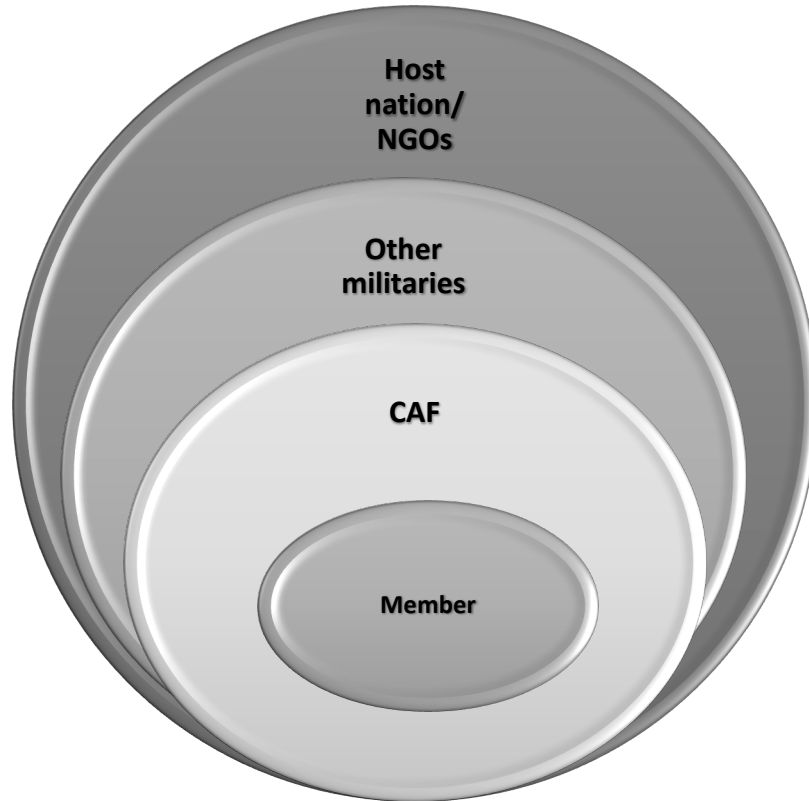
## Average Age

52 years

## Descent

78% of European descent

# Factors the Impact SM



Accept  
Integrate  
Value

# Accept

## Lack of Acceptance

*When I interacted with the [country] I always felt like I was at risk. I always felt like there was danger. I always felt like they didn't respect me. I always felt a sense of they saw me in a way that was ugly, like sexual, and not based on what I was there to do. – Air Force*

## Acceptance

*And it was quite interesting because even once we started to interact with the guerrillas, the combatants – there were a lot of females in their ranks. So, I was feeling very much at ease when interacting with the guerrilla units because they saw me, I saw them, they were cool with women being part of their structure. – Air Force*



# Integrate

## Lack of Integration

*I reported it to the camp SGM... and she says "Oh ma'am, he was probably just confused." I said "Fine, you know I reported it to you, but really think you need to turn that shower thing around so the door is facing into the camp." "Oh, no, no it's fine, the girls like their privacy." I had to go back a few months later and the camp SGM came and talked to me and she said "You were right. That guy went in and assaulted a woman who was in the shower." - Army*

## Integration

*At that point, we switched from segregating the women and the men because too many women are getting raped. There's a known feature that when you segregate all the women, it's like leaving the chicken coop open, they're available and the door is open. So now they switched it off, so that now they didn't say, "You are women" and "you are men", it was just luck of the draw who went where. - Army*





# Value

## Lack of Value

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*I'm sitting next to these guys where the ship is being driven...and they are having a conversation. One guy looks at the other guy and seriously he says, "Have you ever had a fantasy about shoving a knife in a women's chest and fucking the hole in her chest?" And I was like, "Did I just hear you say that?" He goes, "It's just a fantasy." I'm like, "That is the most disturbing thing I've ever heard in my life." - Navy*



## Value

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*There was already built-in diversity, and that made a really good opportunity for women to shine. And women did shine, and when they did – when they shone, it was not seen as a fluke, it was seen as the norm, right? And I listened to these men talk about the brigadier who was so damn good, and it wasn't because, "Oh, wow, she's a woman and she's so damn good," it was just that brigadier is so damn good, she just happened to be a woman, right? - Army*



## Observations

- SM was discussed more for deployments prior to 2010s
- CAF influences other militaries

## Next steps

- Include service members
- Include NCMs

So to finally get on the ground there and do what I had been trained to do for however many years, that was rewarding in and of itself. I would say that's probably the most important thing. Secondly, you know we were Canada, the little flag on your shoulder right – to me it's hugely meaningful. And so we were there in this international coalition of whatever we were doing in [Country] and with the flag on your shoulder. And everywhere you went you were a representative of our country and we were doing what our government was asking us to do. And so that was deeply meaningful to me. – Army

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