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Military culture: Understanding deeper dynamics through the warrior archetype

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Abstract

This paper proposes a new psycho-sociological approach to understanding military culture change, built on the notion of warrior archetype, in line with psychiatrist Carl Jung's concept of archetype. It contends that military culture and its related institutional forms fundamentally seek to mobilize on an ongoing basis human energy produced through the activation of the warrior archetype. The archetype is built on enhancing feelings of strength in numbers, and empowerment through socially sanctioned actions and potential use of violence. It uses the example of the Canadian Armed Forces culture change effort to illustrate that any such planned organizational culture change will fail if it does not remain consistent with activating the warrior archetype, as its central dynamic and purpose.

Keywords:

Archetype; Canadian Armed Forces; Carl Jung; military culture; organizational behavior; psychology; the unconscious.

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Military culture has become a prominent research topic over the last twenty years, as numerous books and articles have been written about it within and beyond NATO countries. Most of these researches seek to legitimize specific normative outcomes through changing military culture, so as to be more aligned with new political and ideological beliefs. A key present-day example of such normative change approach can be seen through the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) culture change project, as illustrated in a recent special issue of the *Canadian Military Journal* (Government of Canada 2023a). By many accounts, it has generated significant controversies in military circles in Canada.

One of the fundamental difficulties behind any debate about military culture is that such a notion is not well defined, and core social dynamics are rarely analyzed in rigorous ways. For instance, in the Canadian case, cultural contexts enabling sexual misconducts have been described as caused by hyper-masculinity, but without explaining why hyper-masculine norms exist in the first place. As of November 2023, although the Canadian military recommended and enacted a series of administrative changes, and has engaged widely the personnel with culture change, limited progress has been observed in defining what kind of culture the CAF is looking to implement and how (Government of Canada 2023b). This situation should not surprise anyone, as the very notion of corporate culture change is very much a contested one, let alone when applied to the military. Research in organization studies shows that the majority of planned organization cultural changes fail (O'Donovan 2018), in the order of 70% (Jones et al. 2019), however, one defines failure. Some even contend that notions of culture change and culture management are highly questionable in themselves (Grey 2017). Unsurprisingly, most of the recent literature on planned culture change and change management is about ways of avoiding failure (Marion and Lewis 2020; Hughes 2022).

Central in all this research literature on cultural organizational change is the finding that failure to enact change is fundamentally caused by ineffective attempts to gain buy-in from personnel (Maurer 1996; Waddell and Sohal 1998; Geisler 2001; Pardo-del-Val and Martínez-Fuentes 2003; Oreg 2006; Erwin and Garman 2010; Rafferty, Jimmieson and Armenakis 2013; Gover, Halinski and Duxbury 2016). Failure to get buy-in can be linked in turn to numerous particular malpractices such as poor leadership, poor messaging, and communication, poor consultation, mismatch between mandatory tasks and proposed new ways, insufficient resources to manage transition, poor understanding of power relations, etc. In sum, appreciating candidly human dynamics and perspectives animating any organization from the point of view of its members is oftentimes a missed fundamental first step.

This article states that any attempt at military culture change must start with an understanding of the fundamental and deeper dynamics behind military culture so that genuine buy-in can be achieved. It is in this context that the notion of archetype developed by the famous psychiatrist Carl Jung is proposed to describe and explain

fundamental social and psychical forces behind any military cultural manifestations. A short overview of unconscious forces in organizations is presented, followed by an explanation of the Jungian archetype in order to propose an operationalized notion of the warrior archetype. Then, a general framework is developed to show how the warrior archetype is the central driver of military institutions, including the case of its dysfunctional version of the shadow archetype. In conclusion, some high-level recommendations about military culture change are suggested, using the Canadian military culture change as an illustration.

1. Unconscious forces in organizations: the missing variable

Culture change, military or otherwise, cannot be successful without taking into consideration powerful and fundamental unconscious forces and dynamics that are too often ignored by researchers and practitioners. In fact, ignoring these unconscious forces has been described as the single most important factor in failing to get genuine buy-in for change. Already in the 1970s, organization studies literature has identified that analysis of cultural practices is too superficial if unconscious elements are not at the core of the analysis (Turner 1977). Recent literature in the field continues to highlight the lack of effort in trying to tackle unconscious dynamics within organizations (Diamond 2007; Carlsen 2016; Long 2019).

The study of collective unconscious forces can be a daunting task, as it does not lend itself easily to typical social science analysis. However, in the study of organizational culture, numerous researchers over the years have found Carl Jung's concept of unconscious archetype as being relevant and useful (Mitroff 1983; Bowles 1993; Aurelio 1995; Tallman 2003; Starr-Glass 2004; Kociatkiewicz and Kostera 2010; Brown et al. 2013; Moxnes 2013; Chen and Narasimhan 2015; Prince and Forr 2021). Unfortunately, organizational applications of Jungian archetypes to the military remain quite rare.

Most of the few research studies examining the warrior archetype have, unfortunately, limited themselves to superficial aspects, namely focusing on the traditional archetypal representations of the warrior in imagery and film instead of trying to assess its deep role in cultural dynamics. In particular, such researches tend to subsume the warrior archetype with a vague notion of "dysfunctional male identity," (see for instance Moore and Gillette 1990; Enns 1994; Pisch 2016; Bloeser and Ramirez 2019; Cloud 2019; Szitanyi 2020; Maloney and Doidge 2021). As discussed below, to subsume the warrior archetype to a particular identity only shows a poor understanding and normatively-based misconstruction and misappropriation of the concept of archetype developed by Jung.

1.1. The concept of archetype

The well-known Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung has developed an entire clinical school of thought in psychology built around the concept of archetype. Jung's work is vast,

complex, and has evolved over time, and he does not provide a short and single definition of archetype (Roesler 2012, 224). However, it can be defined as universal unconscious thought-affect forms, pre-verbal and within the realm of the symbolic and the imaginary. These thought-affect forms are patterned in specific ways to channel libido (psychical/life-force energy), somewhat identifiable through collective myths and symbolism. It has as a fundamental function to be a compensating, or bridging, psychological mechanism trying to re-establish (imperfectly) in the face of emotional stress the primordial child-mother singularity of boundless safety (Young-Eisendrath and Dawson 1997). In other words, archetypes are deeply wired responses to resolve internal contradictions in the face of challenging external situations (Jung 1959, 174). The combination of all these universally based archetypes constitutes what Jung called the collective unconscious.

Yet, even more important is that Jungian archetypes are built on the idea that the human mind is actually designed for life in a group. The bridging/compensating function of archetypes, although operating inside individuals, is meaningful only in social contexts because archetypes are a by-product of life in a group. For instance, the mother archetype implies adults and children, the king archetype implies rulers and followers; the magician archetype implies those who have special knowledge and those who do not; etc. Recent research both in cognitive psychology and in neuropsychology are coming to very similar conclusions about the social nature of the human mind, although through significantly different paths. Furthermore, these disciplines have found fundamental brain dynamics that are very similar to what Jung described as archetypes over 100 years ago (Hunt 2012; Becker and Neuberg 2019a; 2019b).

There has been in the psychoanalytic literature a fair bit of controversy about whether archetypes are inherited from an ancient past (and therefore imply some sort of biological determinism) or whether they are acquired (Roesler 2012). This debate, however, can be solved by reducing the issue of biological determinism to its simplest expression, namely that humans, especially young ones, need to live in groups to survive, and therefore will necessarily encounter typical forms linked to life in a group (Gray 1996). The most obvious one is that to survive a child needs one or more caretakers, usually described under the "mother archetype." The mother archetype does not have to be linked to a woman, nor does it have to be a single person, but the situation of dependency of a child towards one or more adults caring for him/her (however imperfectly) is a universal experience, as otherwise the child, and ultimately humanity, would perish.

Jung discovered archetypes through a life-long and exhaustive search for basic themes recurring in myths and symbolism found in numerous cultures across geography and time. This led him to raise a number of methodological points regarding archetypes. A key point is the critical distinction between an archetype *as-such* (or *per-se*), and cultural expressions found in myths and symbolism where archetypal

forms can be perceived and are referred to as *archetypal representations*. For Jung, archetypes *as-such* are universal, but only in their most generic (or principled) forms, while archetypal representations found in myths, stories, particular events, imagery, etc., are socially, culturally, and historically situated, and can vary greatly in content across time and geography. Also, archetypal representations can become reified over time, acquiring a life of their own, and oftentimes be the object of conflicting interpretations within a particular culture where outdated myths and stories are still used for justifying present-day expectations (Durand 1996; Monneyron 2016). A classic military example of an archetypal representation is to construe officers as honorable knights from an idealized and unhistorical view of the Middle Ages.

To make matters a bit more complicated, Jung also changed his views regarding archetypes *as-such*. In his early writings, he noted that "in principle, it [the archetype] can be named and has an invariable nucleus of meaning--but always only in principle, never as regards its concrete manifestation" (Jung 1959, 80). Yet, in later writings, he suggested that archetypes *as-such* are beyond description (Jung 1969). This last notion has been challenged since in the post-Jungian literature based on the simple fact that if in a clinical context, the goal is to identify which archetypes are activated, or need to be activated, in a patient's own mental universe, then the analyst must have an idea of what to look for, and hence to have some sort of heuristic description of archetypes *as-such* (Smythe and Baydala 2012, 69; Mills 2013, 34). In this light, exploring what could constitute the warrior archetype *as-such*, rather than remaining at the level of the more superficial and conflicting archetypal representations of the warrior may help shed light on a central force behind the military culture.

1.2. The warrior archetype

Jung, unfortunately, never described the warrior archetype and makes only a handful of mentions of it in his texts. Furthermore, and as noted above, most of the literature on the warrior archetype does not explain in any depth what an archetype is, and how it operates as an unconscious force throughout an organization. A notable exception can be found in Pearson (1986), who took a clear and deliberate Jungian perspective to discuss how various archetypes can be activated in making one's life more meaningful, including the warrior archetype. She identifies some of the basic elements underlying the warrior archetype such as seeking feelings of strength and avoiding feelings of weakness, but without offering much explanation of how these elements were selected (Pearson 1986, 21).

It is in this intellectual context that a deeper look at the warrior archetype is found necessary. To do so, one has to go back to Jung's fundamental questions related to the universal function of archetypes, and how it plays an important role in the life of a group so that it becomes a universally found feature. Hence, the first question ought to be why there is such a thing that could be called the warrior archetype. Starting with Pearson, if bridging over fear through feelings of strength is the fundamental function of the warrior archetype, then what are the generic sources of such fear?

One can posit that there are at least two distinct but interrelated universal sources of fear in group life. The first one could be described generically as the "unknown," however one defines it beyond the simple duality of known and unknown. The "unknown" can be a source of fear, as it can possibly bring chaos and misery, especially when construed as unknown by the group. The second source could be described as "them," other groups of humans distinct from "us," whose intentions towards "us" can be malignant or at least unknown. Humans have been and continue to be, unfortunately, a significant threat to other humans. All security institutions, pre-modern and modern, are based on this simple notion.

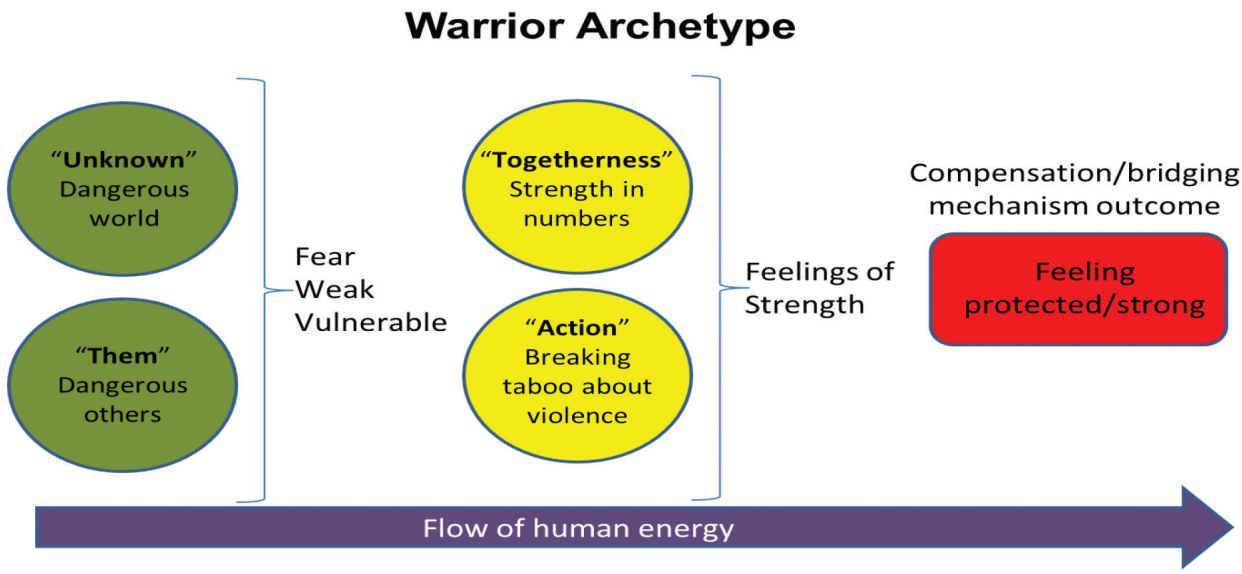
The second set of questions, logically, is related to what generically brings feelings of strength in a group context, which can bridge over or compensate for feelings of weakness or vulnerability emanating from fear of the "unknown" and of "them"? Once again, one can posit that there are at least two fundamental building blocks, or principles, to the warrior archetype. The first one could be termed as "togetherness" in the sense that there are feelings of strength and safety in numbers. This is a pervasive, if not ubiquitous, notion that has been studied since the early days of social psychology (McDougall 1908) and continues to produce an abundant literature (Park and Hinsz 2006). Given its widespread reality, it is probably safe to see strength in numbers as a universal group experience.

The second building block of the warrior archetype could be defined as "unrestrained action," implying that one feels empowered when one can act without restrictions to deal with the issue at hand. However, it carries a particular complexity, as it also includes the potential use of violence. In this context, a full feeling of psychological empowerment is possible through one's own group lifting social restrictions on the use of violence. The social sciences literature on violence is also quite vast and the particular importance of sanctioned forms of violence was identified in its early days, particularly in the work of pioneer sociologist Max Weber (1919). What constitutes legitimate forms of violence, who should legitimize it, and in what circumstances are still hotly debated questions today, but the tremendous empowering effect of socially sanctioned violence has been well-known for a long time in social sciences (Milgram 1974).

The combination of "togetherness" producing feelings of strength in numbers with "unrestrained action" producing feelings of empowerment by the potential of using sanctioned violence, if necessary, creates a powerful release of psychical energy that can compensate fears emanating from the "unknown" and from "them." This constitutes a heuristic description of the warrior archetype being activated. The activation of the archetype does not necessarily need the use of violence to exist, as it is fundamentally a psychological compensating mechanism. It can be seen in its more ostentatious form in fictional representations in television shows like the *Sons of Anarchy*, where the main characters go to "war" against another bikers' gang. The gang has sanctioned the use of violence, based on an informal bikers' code, and the vast energy release is clearly shown in their eagerness to fight. But the warrior

archetype is also activated when a group of kids are adventuring in a wooden area less familiar to them; they go as a gang and usually, a few will instinctively pick up a wooden stick. A last example, from personal experience, was at a daycare picking up my daughter early and watching the all-female staff rushing to the door ready to handle a stranger woman verbally angry at the daycare, for some unclear reasons. The selection of these examples is to highlight that the activation of the warrior archetype *as-such* is not military or paramilitary-specific, nor is it gender-specific, and does not require the actual use of violence but only its potential. Hence, this description of the warrior archetype seems to have all the potential to pass Jung's universality test. Graphically, it can be represented as in Figure 1.

Figure 1



1.3. Activating the warrior archetype as a cultural practice

If we accept that the fundamental function of the warrior archetype is to produce a significant amount of psychical energy through "togetherness" and "unrestrained action" to handle an "unknown" world where dangerous "them" can be found, then one can posit that past and present military institutions, and their cultural dynamics, are fundamentally designed to "harvest" or "mobilize" this powerful source of human energy on an ongoing basis. This energy is in turn used to get things done in the face of violent adversity, physical stress, deprivation, and all the other challenges that war brings. In other words, permanently activating the warrior archetype in military personnel, to continuously mobilize such psychical energy, is the central dynamic of any military culture ancient or contemporary, whether there is an actual war to wage or in preparation for a known or unknown potential future war.

If the profound and fundamental mobilizing effect of the archetype *as-such* is not at the center of any study of military culture, then it will miss the central issue at stake. For instance, the seemingly irrational military obsession about creating conditions for team bonding on a nearly 24-hour basis, allegedly "proven" in promoting military

cohesion, even if a given personnel is working together all the time anyway, has been described by some as "male" dominating cultural ways, and seen as problematic in itself (Pendlebury 2020). Yet, this explanation is superficial at best, as such a social and cultural practice in the military only makes sense if one understands that it is fundamentally supporting an unconscious dynamics geared towards channeling on an ongoing basis the energy of an activated warrior archetype, especially through the "togetherness" component. Togetherness is not particularly male or female, even if the ways it is practiced may follow particular gendered cultural practices. The actual impact on military effectiveness and desirability of such permanent bonding is unconsciously assumed as valid because it is so deeply coherent with activating the warrior archetype, and therefore conscious and rational explanations to prove the need for such perpetual bonding very rarely occur in a military context; it is taken for granted.

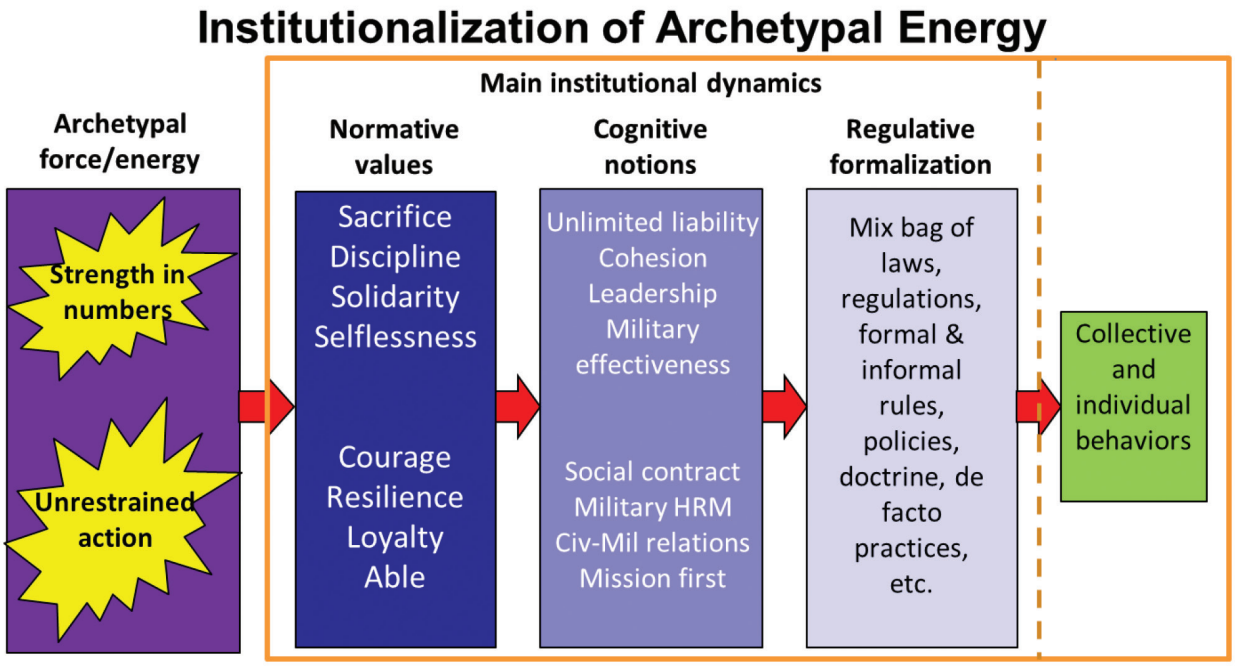
This lack of awareness and understanding of how central unconscious forces operate puts military organizations in a disadvantageous position in the face of those outside the military demanding change, as it is a pain to explain what seems so obvious. Furthermore, significant challenges in getting buy-in for changing ways of bonding in the military become suddenly quite explainable, especially if what is proposed as an alternative to bonding does not seek to continue activating the warrior archetype among the personnel. An approach to culture change incorporating the warrior archetype, however, would state and seek to find other ways where togetherness can be activated to the same degree but in manners where both men and women in uniform can feel safe. Unfortunately, the tendency has been rather to condemn such military practices as "male domination," as a blanket accusation (Duncanson 2015), without providing any credible alternative. Experience has shown that in such situations informal practices to reinforce togetherness emerge, and they tend to be far more dysfunctional and make buy-in even more difficult to achieve (Maaranen and Tienari 2020).

2. Warrior archetype and military institutional dynamics

The ongoing mobilization of psychical energy through the activation of the warrior archetype has been institutionalized in all militaries, and through this institutionalization, one can see cultural dynamics emerging. It is found in official doctrines and military history and numerous apocryphal narratives, which link back directly to the archetypal building block of "togetherness" in discipline, teamwork, solidarity, selflessness, sacrifice, etc. Other officially espoused normative values can be linked back to "unrestrained action" through sanctioned violence in courage, resilience, loyalty, ability (or fitness), etc. In turn, these normative notions have their counterparts in the cognitive realm through various formal concepts in military literature and practices such as unlimited liability, leadership, cohesion, military effectiveness, civil-military relations, social contract, mission first, the universality of

service, and the many criteria used in military human resources management. At the regulatory level, all these find themselves formalized in one way or another through a mixed bag of laws, regulations, permanent orders, policies, formal and informal rules, de facto practices, etc. The complexity of these arrangements is certainly staggering, but they all have unconscious and implicit golden threads going back to the warrior archetype *as-such*, providing them with foundational unconscious legitimacy. This deep unconscious legitimacy, in turn, is what allows psychical energy to be effectively "mobilized" permanently through those arrangements by continuously activating the warrior archetype. Graphically, it can be represented as in Figure 2.

Figure 2



To be fair, the warrior archetype is certainly not the only one being active in military institutions. One can think of the king archetype (group governance), where loyalty to the state creates particular conditions in decision-making; the magician archetype (those with special knowledge) where strategists and technologists have usually special privileges in the military, or the merchant archetype (making the most of the group's resources, oftentimes taking the form of managerialism in the modern world) can produce a conflict with military ethos, etc. Yet, the warrior archetype remains the single most important one in a military institution.

Any directed military culture changes based on altering on an ad hoc basis these institutional arrangements are at risk of failure if they are not done through a coherent effort deliberately congruent with the warrior archetype. A classic example was the unsuccessful American policy described as "don't ask, don't tell" regarding gay and lesbian people serving in the military (The White House 2021). If in theory, one's personal life should not be of interest to the military institution, collectively

mobilizing on an ongoing basis the psychical energy of individuals in uniform requires comprehensive "togetherness" to create feelings of strength in numbers. Past military practices have led to the exclusion of gays and lesbians formally and/or informally because their presence was seen as undermining togetherness, and "don't ask, don't tell" implicitly maintained such an approach. More recent policies focusing holistically on what an individual brings to the group, as a first step towards togetherness through individual commitment, are far more likely to succeed. This is because they remain aligned with the warrior archetype while altering how togetherness is construed from a general individual blanket contribution to the group's safety towards a skill and ability-based contribution to the group's safety. On the flip side, however, doctrinarian and academic-influenced proposals published in recent years where any form of togetherness is constantly criticized as attempts at domination, while seeking complete individual autonomy, if not sovereignty, for individual military members are going completely against the warrior archetype and are, in time, bound to fail.

2.1. Shadow and Warrior Archetype

When Jung presented his concept of the archetype, he also introduced the notion of the mythological realm, which is made of values, notions, rules, stories, myths, and symbols that are not universal, as they are always situated in time and space, in social and cultural practices. As discussed above, it is the realm of the archetypal representations. Yet, this realm is not static, things change whether it is because of natural crises, human affairs, new technologies, etc., and this leads to making aspects of the mythological realm out of phase with new realities over time. For Jung, it is an important aspect of analytic psychology, because many mental illnesses arise when an individual's deep beliefs become out-of-phase with reality, which could lead ultimately to psychosis (i.e., one living in his/her own mental world disconnected from social reality). The classic example can be found in overbearing parents towards their adult children, not accepting that they are autonomous adults now.

In these situations, individuals regress, and a shadow or negative archetype gets activated (Jung 1959, 20-21). The activation of the shadow archetype has for effect of redirecting life-force energy through a modified pattern, acting as a defense mechanism that tends to be very dysfunctional (Jung 1969, 96). Usually, it can be observed by hanging on older beliefs (i.e. values, notions, rules, etc.). The shadow archetype is also a bridging or compensating mechanism, and when activated it seeks to protect the internal unconscious psychological balance of an individual caused by the significant discrepancy between one's inner world and the outer reality. Also, a significant amount of physical energy is produced, and where the nasty side of one's personality can be observed. But for Jung, the shadow is not something to be rejected or to be belittled, instead, it is a part of one's personality to acknowledge and understand so that a genuine change and adaptive process can be launched.

Jung provided also a collective-level use of his archetypal concept of the shadow through his study of the rise of Nazism in Germany; hence shadow archetypal

configurations have demonstrated analogs at the collective level (Lewin 2009). More generally speaking, in the case of groups "the collective shadow is derived from the influence of broader social, cultural and religious factors that make certain qualities and characteristics of the personalities of persons belonging to the same group, nation or culture incompatible with a prevailing ethos or worldview" (Hennelly 1988, 222-223). The most common symptoms of a collective shadow being activated can be found when a group is developing a fixation on other "[…] groups which do not match the definition laid down by the cultural canon: aliens, inferiors, criminals, etc. Second, it consists of the negative projections by the dominant group upon the subordinate groups" (Gray 1996, 274). In other words, whoever does not "fit" into an older worldview is deemed the source of the group's problems, and ought to be dealt with.

This brings us to the heart of the matter regarding contemporary military culture change debates. There is very little doubt that 21st-century liberal views create conditions for the emergence of shadow warrior archetypal configuration in the military. The world changes but some militaries do not. If we go back to the case of the Canadian military, despite what recruits, trainees, and overall personnel are told by the senior leadership, they are working in an institution that faces significant contradictions. One should not underestimate the profound and negative impact on personnel of repeated stories and events such as the cancellation of the maritime helicopter project by a click of the fingers in 1993, the so-called "decade of darkness from 1992 to 2002 where the military faced deep budget cuts, the ongoing present lack of commitment to reach the 2% of GDP on military budget, the lack of high-end equipment to send to Ukraine, the interminable saga of the F-18 replacement, the ongoing societal narrative that the Canadian military should only be doing peacekeeping, etc. All these narratives send powerful and essentially permanent signals to the effect that the necessity of having armed forces in Canada is construed as questionable, as an expansive optional institution. This perception is also confirmed in a growing literature in security studies about Canada's seriously out-of-phase defence and foreign policies (Juneau et al. 2020). In this kind of environment, the central compensating function of the warrior archetype appears as being not necessary. To put it in Jungian terms, the social signal is that there is no need or desire to deal with the dangerous "them" out there and that the world does not have significant "unknowns" to worry about. The fundamental problem, however, is the military institution and its leadership remain actively dedicated to mobilizing the energy of an activated warrior archetype, through training, planning, and preparing for the eventuality of armed conflicts. The discrepancy between what the outer world is saying and what is going on in the inner world of the institution is significant.

2.2. Activation of the shadow warrior archetype as a cultural practice

2.2.1. Inward validation

If a society rejects a particular sub-group, then such sub-group will develop its own internal validation process to compensate. This is a well-known phenomenon

observed among minority groups, and there is a substantive and long-standing literature in social sciences about the centrality of social validation (Festinger 1954; Becker 1962; Berger and Luckmann 1966). In a military context, internal validation can go as far as seeking to self-appropriate legitimacy in the use of violence, which can become a critical element in understanding rogue behaviors. In more extreme cases, research has shown that social "disengagement factors can assist in enhancing the moral acceptability of killing, and in turn, make killing easier and less distressing (Aquino et al. 2007; Castano, Leidner and Slawuta 2008; Coman et al. 2014; Maoz and McCauley 2008; McAlister, Bandura and Owen 2006; Webber et al. 2013, 471). Similarly, veterans returning from conflict zones oftentimes face substantive challenges in reintegrating into civilian life, as the nature of social validation changes significantly (Demers 2011). In other words, to find back the empowering effect of "unrestrained action," some in the military will redesign on their own accord how the sanction of violence ought to be, with all the problems and issues that it entails for the institution.

The literature in organization studies also emphasizes how social validation produces cultural meaning and shapes identities, especially for newcomers in organizations (Smith et al. 2013). Yet, those cultural meanings are always open for challenge and are routinely resistant in organizations (Prasad and Prasad 2000; Mumby 2005; Burnes 2015), especially when new values sought after do not align with existing values within the personnel (Burnes and Jackson 2011). In these cases, resistance is not necessarily obvious and can be quite subtle, if not unconscious in nature (Schein 1984). It often takes the form of front-stage compliance while effectively engaging in backstage resistance, where a different set of values are adhered to (Ybema and Horvers 2017). This research literature, if enriched with the notion of the warrior archetype, shows that if on one hand the permanent activation of the archetype is sought after by the military institution, but the implicit sanction of using violence and even the existence of a dangerous world and "them" is denied on the other hand, one can only see that inward validation being the only way to maintain a collective internal psychical balance, to maintain in one's own eyes the legitimacy and value of one's own profession.

2.2.2. Negative projection against the "weak"

As the warrior archetype is also about bringing feelings of strength through togetherness, if older ways of producing togetherness are also denied, and more importantly not clearly replaced by new ones seen as legitimate, while the institution still seeks to mobilize the psychical energy by permanently activating the archetype, then the formation of a shadow version would be also the obvious result.

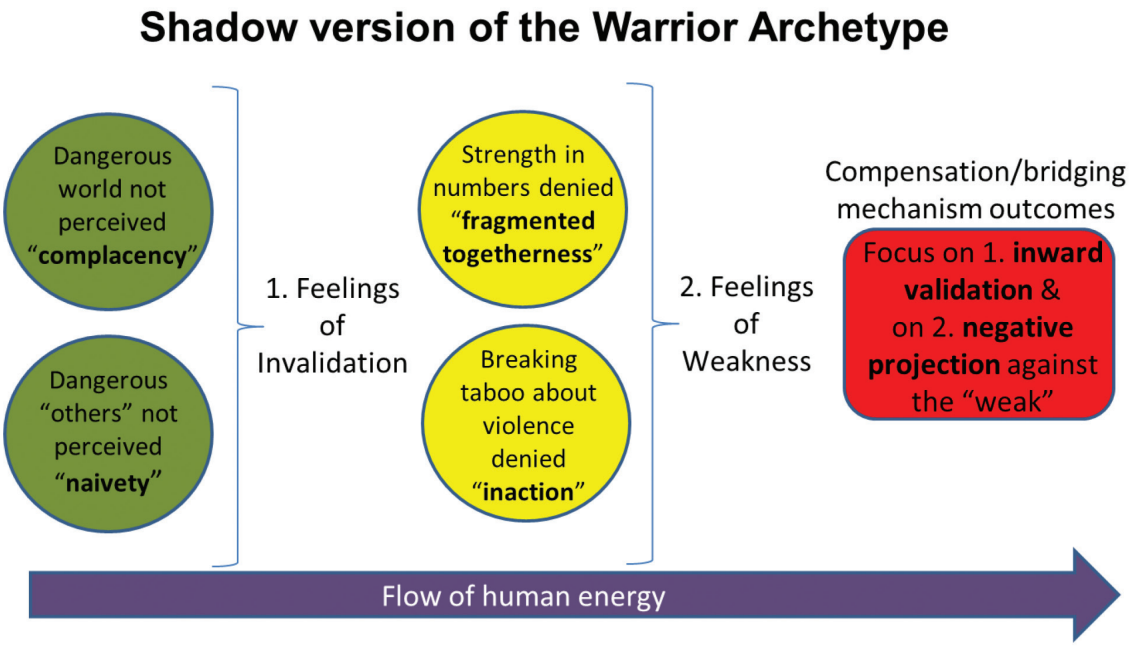
There is a vast literature about discriminatory attitudes and behaviors in social sciences, and it would be beyond the scope of this paper to review it all. For the purpose of this article, the notion of projection from analytical psychology will be used to shed light on how a dysfunctional compensation process is put in place to maintain feelings of togetherness. The notion of projection in psychology is a classic

one and can be defined as "ascribing of one's own motivations, feelings, and behavior to other persons" (Murstein 1957). The study of racism, for instance, has been and continues to be informed by the concept of projection (Clark 1999; Samuels 2020). Projection, in such contexts, means that individuals, who are psychologically challenged in their identity, ego, or self-concept, will project towards others the feelings causing their challenge. In the case of racism, racist projections are these individuals' own feelings of inferiority, of lack of self-esteem, of destitution that are projected towards groups who are visibly different from them, and who are usually under-privileged because of pre-existing social inequalities. According to this approach, racism is built in many ways on the foundation of an unconscious shadow and dysfunctional compensation mechanism.

When it comes to the modern military, if feelings of weakness are not compensated by feelings of strength through togetherness, then military members are at risk of projecting their feelings of weakness towards those who could be ascribed as the "source" of what is undermining togetherness. Given that historically military organizations have defined and cultivated the source of effective togetherness through homogeneity, then it should be expected that anyone undermining homogeneity can become a target for projection, namely women, minorities, non-heterosexuals, and even individuals coming from different social class origins.

Such a projection does not necessarily take the form of collective violent actions, but it can take the form of conscious and deliberate activities to encourage the "weak" to leave the organization. Yet, the most common forms in today's military are likely to be found in individual aggressions, micro-aggressions, and deliberate passive attitudes toward unhealthy work climate. Graphically, the overall shadow version of the warrior archetype could be represented in Figure 3.

Figure 3



3. Strategic-level way forward in light of the warrior archetype

This section proposes some high-level or strategic considerations for a way forward for culture change efforts in a military context, and to inform *the spirit* in which future policies and programs should be built to improve probabilities of success in implementing positive and durable cultural change. If one accepts that a shadow version of the warrior archetype is undermining the establishment of a healthier organizational culture, then addressing the core reasons as to why a shadow archetype has emerged should be the first order of business. As an illustration, the Canadian military case is used here once again.

3.1. Revalidating CAF personnel by acknowledging reality

In the early 2000s, the then Chief of Defence Staff General Rick Hillier was fully engaged in revalidating the CAF personnel after the so-called "decade of darkness" of the 1990s, marked by significant budget cuts and public criticism about personnel misconduct (Galloway 2007). Newly found energy and enthusiasm could be observed in many quarters of the military at the time (Thorne 2005). His focus was on getting back pride in the military profession, by engaging positively with the personnel and the general population and restoring effective military capabilities. These activities were described as a "transformation" effort (Jeffery 2010). Of course, the active Canadian engagement in the Afghan conflict coincided with his various strategic transformation activities. The CAF, at the time, had a clear dangerous "them" to deal with, and both the government and society showed significant solidarity towards this engagement. The era of focusing on peacekeeping was gone, "real" combat was the norm (Fletcher and Hove 2012). The point here is not about duplicating approaches taken during that era, but rather to illustrate what revalidating CAF personnel looks like in concrete terms.

Unfortunately, there are some structural issues that are beyond the CAF leadership control, and many of the issues faced by Hiller have resurfaced, even if in a different guise. Successive governments in Canada, and society in general, have only passing support for the military (Leuprecht and Sokolsky 2015). Once the engagement in the Afghan conflict subsided, a return to the "normality" of limited solidarity reinstated itself rather quickly. For instance, Canada's military spending reached a historical low of 0.99% of GDP in 2014 (Statista.com 2024). The CAF is a small military, almost always in a catching-up mode with respect to military equipment and technology, implicitly (or by neglect) not designed for high-end military engagements, etc., are all outcomes of the Canadian strategic culture (Massie and Vucetic 2019). This broader societal culture has shown no sign that will evolve in the foreseeable future either (The Economist 2023). As another clear illustration, through a leak to the *Washington Post* (Coletta 2023), it was discovered that Prime Minister Trudeau informed NATO allies that he had no intention to ever reach the 2% of GDP allocated to defense spending, something he never denied. It is in this context the CAF senior leadership needs to have an honest, frank, and ongoing discussion with its personnel

about what it really means to be part of the CAF today; namely, despite growing threats brought by Russia, the People's Republic of China, Iran, disinformation, etc., the Canadian military is not at par with our allies, and it will likely never be (Charron and Ferguson 2019). Canada does what it can, beyond symbolic gestures, but with limited will to do so. In other words, starting with the leadership, a non-complacent reality check is much needed, and it has already started to some extent. As Canada's Chief of Defence Staff General Eyre noted recently "Our people see the degrading declining security situation around the world and so trying to explain this [latest round of budget cuts] to them is very difficult…" (Tumilty 2023).

Revalidation needs to be based on a more sober and very public assessment of the CAF's overall situation and context. Courageous truth speaking to political power will likely be required as well. The overall objective for the CAF senior leadership is to create a self-concept based on reality rather than fantasy, and this will not be an easy task, but it is a necessary one. As noted in the organization studies literature, aligning lived values with espoused values is a critical task, but at times it is the espoused values that need to be seriously revisited (Bourne and Jenkins 2013; Jonsen et al. 2015; O'Brien 2020). The outcome of this is to adjust the ongoing mobilization of psychical energy through the activation of the warrior archetype in a manner that is consistent with what can be actually expected of the military institution. Unrealistic espoused values can have deep damaging effects, as discussed in organization studies (Smollan and Sayers 2009; Inabinett and Ballaro 2014). To put it in other words, there are some serious institutional "delusions of grandeur" in the belief that Canada can have an all-purpose force, high-end and combat capable in all-spectrum military conflict. This issue is not uniquely Canadian, and has been noted elsewhere (Carpenter 1997; Coyne 2011; Porter 2023). This will not create a high level of energy as observed in Hillier's time, but it will create better channeled "quiet energy" to change what is dysfunctional and start undoing inward validation, removing frustrations, and bringing expectations in line with reality. This would lead also to taking ownership of change, by regaining internal control over a narrative that would be far more honest and aligned with reality. Once again, the importance of internally owning such alignment has been underlined in organization studies (Balogun and Jenkins 2003; He and Baruch 2009; Karasvirta and Teerikangas 2022). The Canadian military did have great historical moments, but they fully belong to history. This is the difficult part that the senior military leadership needs to address to bring real buy-in to culture change and deactivate the shadow archetype.

3.2. Changing the meaning of strength and weakness

The second macro-level task would be to change how creating strength is construed within the CAF. There are already useful precedents based on the notion that diversity is a source of strength (Chuang, Church and Zikic 2004; Ashikali and Groeneveld 2015; Taylor, Santiago and Hynes 2019). Such a notion is certainly not antithetical to military affairs either. The synergetic effects of using the different combat arms,

logistics, intelligence, etc., in the Army, the notions of jointness, and force multipliers are all examples of strength through diversity. The key challenge is to bring this view of strength through diversity at the individual level, not just at the unit and sub-unit level (Resteigne and Manigart 2021). From a warrior archetype perspective, what brings strength in numbers is not defined in its content. Hence, any initiative that is built and sincerely perceived as growing the strength will be necessarily aligned with the warrior archetype and therefore would be much easier to legitimize and to get buy-in (Hubbart 2022). The key is for the CAF to own such an initiative through well well-calibrated and honest narrative about strength through diversity as something worth pursuing in its own right, rather than just being reactive to the government, societal expectations, and externally imposed narratives (Duval-Lantoine 2023).

In parallel, the definition of "weakness" needs also to be redefined publically, as it is central to the activation of the shadow warrior archetype. Research has shown that inequality leads to mistrust and lack of cohesion, acting therefore against togetherness (Helkama 2012). And yet, this has to reach the primary cohesion level not just the institutional one (Siebold 2007), which is where many culture change exercises fail in getting genuine buy-in. Again, there are also useful precedents to work with. For instance, Lt. Gen David Morrison, commander of the Australian Army made a famous video in 2013, if looked through the lenses of the warrior archetype, he essentially conveyed the sentiment that those who cannot accept diversity and who are sticking to the old ways are now a source of weakness, and they should get out of the military immediately; they are not needed as they are a liability. Such messaging, which was directed to every individual soldier, is also fully aligned with the warrior archetype because it is about building strength through togetherness. Such direct leadership activity can then, in turn, give personnel the possibility to own for themselves the change narrative (Dalpiaz and Di Stefano 2018). It appears, according to many accounts, that it was a successful approach (BBC News 2016).

It is not to say that the military of old ages is to be disgraced, quite to the contrary, it needs to continue to be honored for what it did at the time and within the social context in which it operated. The key is to convey the message that times have changed and what brings strength has changed too, and so the military needs to change to remain strong. This also means that all the discourses and narratives from influential people outside the military that are implicitly or unconsciously built on a notion of "evangelizing the barbarians" need to be kept at bay, as all it achieves is undermining trust and buy-in, as noted recently in Canada (Hopper 2024). Such messaging is profoundly counter-productive if one is seeking to build strength, get buy-in, and ultimately produce real and long-lasting change.

Conclusion

This paper seeks to introduce the notion of archetype, and more specifically the warrior archetype, to shed some light on military culture and its deep dynamics in

an attempt to fill some void in the literature. This notion provides a valid anchoring to understand military culture, especially when it is defined as a series of narratives, implicit norms, practices, and symbolisms geared towards mobilizing on an ongoing basis the psychical energy of an activated warrior archetype. It also provides a deeper understanding of why a military culture can become dysfunctional when shadow forms of the warrior archetype are active. A second objective was to provide some high-level illustrations of the difficulties of culture change in a military context. Any policy or program that cannot build a golden thread back to the warrior archetype *as such* is likely to be doomed to fail in the long run.

It also opens conversations about resistance to culture change where resistance is actually construed as a normal compensating mechanism that should not be ignored nor belittled as normative aberrations. People who resist are not stupid; rather they and the deeper reasons behind their resistance need to be understood from *their* perspective. When there is significant organizational resistance, the onus is always on the ones seeking change to provide better legitimate, and acceptable solutions. In the final analysis, seeking the reasons behind behaviors and attitudes fueled by a shadow version of the warrior archetype, and addressing them for what they are, is a far more productive approach than preaching a particular version of "Truth and Virtue" as an imperative.

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