

**Playing Soldier?: Combining Theatre and Theory to Explore the
Experiences of Women in the Military**

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Abstract

This thesis explores the experiences of women in the military using narratives published by military servicewomen from Canada and the United States. The success of traditionally “female” bodies in combat-related trades in the military destabilizes the binary opposition between “male” and “female” in western society. Nevertheless, women are still excluded from identifying with the “soldier ideal” that is emphasized in western militaries and must make alternative “hybrid” identifications in order to articulate their understanding of their experiences in the military. Gender integration needs to be rethought in hyper-masculine military institutions. Since “hybrid” identities can be seen emerging in military servicewomen, members of the military have a unique opportunity to rethink the “soldier ideal” in order to make room for bodies that express gender identifications other than “male.” While military servicewomen adapt to their roles by generating “hybrid” identifications in the “Third Space” between the “soldier ideal” and feminine identities, military men are excluded from accessing the benefits of women’s “hybrid” identifications.

Men, women, and other emergent gender identities need to engage in a theatrical exploration of their experiences to investigate the possibility of generating new military ideals that resist social constructions that oppose gender integration. It is crucial that research about the experiences of women in the military involve bodies in order to acknowledge that these women experience resistance to their presence because their bodies visibly differ from the masculinised “soldier ideal.” Some of this experience cannot be articulated verbally. I work toward creating the conditions for bodies to engage with my research by combining a theatrical script with an accompanying analytic essay.

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“Builders know that there
is a grain in wood and a grain in
stone; but there is also a grain in flesh.”

Anne Michaels, *The Winter Vault*

“What we are drawn to and what we turn away from are equal, I think,
in their power over our bodies and our minds and seem, to me
at least, to be equally determining of what becomes of us.”

Jane Urquhart, *Sanctuary Line*

“How does one paint what is not there?” asked Jean.
“One paints the place exactly as one sees it,
said Lucjan “Then, one paints it again.””

Anne Michaels, *The Winter Vault*

Curtains up

Introduction

Not Quite Soldiers: A Play

Notes on the play

The play is set in a room where **Abby**, a researcher, is conducting a theatre workshop with women in the Navy that aims to explore their everyday experiences at work and their identities as women within a male-dominated institution. There are folding chairs scattered around the stage, a few tables with Tim Horton's coffee cups on them, along with bags, purses, jackets, and some props people brought along in case they need them.

All the participants in the workshop are women. Male characters will appear in the scenes created by participants, and should be portrayed by the women themselves. As in a workshop setting, all the participants should remain in or near the workshop space for the entire show. If they are not participating in a scene, participants function as a sort of audience within the playworld watching the scenes the other characters create. This is the group's third meeting and two more will follow.

Dramatis Personae

Grace: hometown – Saskatoon SK. Liaison with **Abby**, and, therefore, helps to keep the peace in the group. Enthusiastic about the project and wants it to go well. Some experience with theatre growing up.

Mita: hometown – Toronto ON. Good friends with **Sophia**. Supportive.

Sophia: hometown – Halifax NS. Good friends with **Mita**; very shy, sometimes reluctant to participate.

Charlie: hometown – St. Alban's NL. Sense of humour, very inclusive, tries to keep things civil.

Kate: hometown – Winnipeg MB. Doesn't see use of workshop. Most masculine participant. Made friends with **Meave** at boot camp, but doesn't like her anymore.

Meave: hometown – Brantford ON. Doesn't quite feel at home in the military or understand **Kate's** hostility towards her.

Marie-Josée (Jo): hometown – Notre-Dame-des-Bois QC. Balances femininity with the military well; confident, respected.

Jen: hometown – Victoria BC. Outgoing, motherly.

Abby: a researcher running a workshop that explores the experiences of women in the military. Enthusiastic about her work but still unsure of how to deal with conflict. No military experience.

Jen, Mita, Sophia, Marie-Josée, and Charlie enter, flicking on the lights as they go. **Kate** enters after the rest of the group and watches with her arms folded across her chest. The women exchange greetings and begin warming-up in small groups.

Some are practicing posing each other in various expressive stances using three methods. The first is by taking up the pose themselves and getting their partner to imitate it; the second, like in puppeteering, sees one partner pulling the limbs and bodies of the other into place using invisible strings. In the third method, one partner physically manipulates the other's body into position. Other pairs are face to face grasping each other just above the wrists as they slowly sit down and stand back up, or, holding their hands above their heads and placing them palms together, they are leaning forward so that they are off-balance and supporting their combined weight.

There is a little chatter, sometimes laughter if someone slips up, but the pairs are working intently. **Kate** is not participating.

Grace enters upstage right carrying a table. She pauses to observe before entering the scene and placing the table and two chairs centre stage. When she enters, the pairs of women stop what they're doing and begin to watch. As **Grace** sets up her scene, she speaks to the other women.

Grace: It's a big decision, joining the Navy. Even now. Especially for a woman.

The women watching nod their agreement. **Grace** gets **Mita** from the watching group and poses her on the edge of the stage downstage right in conversation with the empty space beside her. She places **Sophia** downstage left posed as if she is talking on the phone. She gets **Meave** to stand close to centre stage as if she's in conversation with someone beside her. Throughout the scene the actors who have been posed remain frozen when they're not involved in the action.

Grace: When I told people I joined I couldn't believe some of the reactions I got.

Grace sits down beside **Mita** to complete the image.

Mita: Wait, Canada has a Navy?

Grace nods.

Mita: And you're in it? *(Pause, then, singing)* In the Na-vy, you can sail the seven seas!
In the Na-vy... *(Grace looks unimpressed)* Guess you get that a lot, eh?

Mita freezes.

Grace *(to the audience again)*: The reactions I heard about after were pretty unbelievable.

Mita stands and takes out a cell phone, calling **Sophia**.

Mita: Grace joined the Navy, eh?

Sophia: I didn't know she was batting for the other team!

Mita (*laughs*): Nah, that doesn't mean she's a lesbian. Does it? (*Pause, then, as if this is evidence.*) She *will* probably have to stop wearing makeup now. Do you think she'll shave her head??

Sophia: She'll probably have to. I don't think they get much of a choice about those things. Who knows what she'll have to do!

They freeze. Grace, who has been watching the scene, turns to the audience and shakes her head. She gets up and places herself in the tableau beside Meave.

Grace: And, the most predictable.

Meave: The military? That's certainly not a career for a woman.

Grace: What?

Meave: Well, there's your children to consider.

Grace: ...I don't have any children.

Meave: But you might. One day, you might. And then what?

Meave freezes. **Grace** rolls her eyes and begins to set up a tableau centre stage where **Marie-Josée** (Dad) and **Jen** (Mum) are doing dishes.

Grace: But I was most surprised by my parents.

The women in the other three tableaux break their freezes and begin to watch as Grace enters the kitchen scene.

Marie-Josée/Dad: Ah, Grace. How was your day?

Grace (*to the group*): They were also the people I was most nervous about telling.

She begins to look nervous and doesn't respond. Jen and Marie-Josée exchange a glance and the pace of their activity slows.

Jen/Mum: What is it? What's wrong?

Grace: I need to talk to you guys. Sit down.

They sit.

Grace: I've decided to (*rapidly*) join the Navy.

Jen/Mum: Oh, ok.

Grace looks shocked.

Marie-Josée/Dad (*chuckles*): Well it makes sense, sweetheart.

Marie-Josée/Dad (*explaining*): You're a great leader and you like to experience things most people haven't.

Grace pulls out a chair and falls into it.

Jen/Mum: You've always been adventurous. (*She stands to continue with the dishes.*)
And caring.

Marie-Josée/Dad: You're insightful.

Jen/Mum: They'll be lucky to have you.

Jen and Marie-Josée freeze and **Grace** turns to the audience.

Grace: Can. You. Believe. It? And now, here I am, four years later, a Leading Seaman and this, I guess, was how my story began.

She squints into the back of the theatre looking for Abby who enters from somewhere in the audience.

Grace (*to Abby*): Is that the kinda thing you want, Abby?

Only twenty-two years ago, in 1989, the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal ruled that the Canadian military's "Combat Related Employment of Women" (CREW) trials, which integrated women into previously all-male units on a temporary basis, should mark the beginning of the permanent integration of women into combat-related military roles (Davis n.p.). Before this ruling, women had been employed in the military, but had not been permitted to seek employment in combat roles (Davis n.p.). Women could not stay on ships at sea overnight (Bennett 53), or fight with a combat unit in the army ("Equality in the CF: Women – History" Forces.ca). Following the Tribunal's ruling, the

days of assessing whether or not women could handle the rigours of life in combat trades officially ended, and since 1989, women have been integrated into most parts of the Canadian military with varying degrees of success. In this thesis, I engage with the successes and limitations of this integration.

I joined the Canadian Naval Reserves in 2002. Although women had been working in combat trades for thirteen years by then, as a member of a “hard sea trade” – one that would involve me in combat at sea if I was deployed on operations – I still encountered a number of hurdles due to my gender. My experiences have led me to question the effectiveness of integrating women into an institution long associated with male rites of passage and, consequently, disassociated with female rites of passage.

With its participation in the war in Afghanistan and the recent presence of women in direct combat, the Canadian Forces (CF) finds itself renegotiating what military service means. Additionally, recent empirical studies question how successful the integration of women into militaries can be without first implementing significant institutional change.¹ At this unique moment in the integration process, two questions come to mind: in the twenty-two years since women have been serving in combat with the Canadian Forces, and based on the experiences of military women from other countries, how are women experiencing military service through their bodies? Additionally, what do these experiences have to say about the success of gender integration to date?

Before I describe my project as it is now, I will explain what went awry with my original idea for this thesis. I began my research with an interest in exploring gender

¹ For examples of studies that question the integration of women into the Canadian Forces, see Donna Winslow & Jason Dunn, Nancy Taber, and Angela R. Febbraro. For a similar study that concerns the American military, see Lisa A. Boyce & Ann M. Herd.

integration in the military and with incorporating bodies into the process of generating and disseminating data. Accordingly, I planned to conduct an exploration of the position of women in the naval reserves, approaching the topic in two ways: theatrically, working with volunteers from a naval reserve unit in a three hour image theatre workshop² to explore their experiences; and analytically, using published empirical and ethnographic studies concerning women in militaries generally. I would then use performance and stigma theory and my analysis of the data generated in the workshop, to inform the creation of a theatrical script that I would use as a means of disseminating my data. An analytic component describing the impetus behind my project and the events of the image theatre workshop would have accompanied the script.

I planned to generate data in an image theatre workshop in order to reveal the stigmatized identities and experiences women incorporate into, and express through, their bodies. Augusto Boal, a Brazilian politician and theatre practitioner, employed image theatre in his practice of Theatre of the Oppressed. Image theatre emphasizes the importance of eliminating spoken language in human interaction with the intention of “making thought *visible*” and illustrating experiences that cannot be described in spoken or written language (*Theater* 138; emphasis in original). Boal notes that the body, through the repetitive action of everyday tasks, is conditioned to move in specific ways (*Theater* 128). Image theatre focuses on breaking individuals out of this patterned movement by drawing their attention to the way in which their bodies have been conditioned to move and by making the body the primary means with which they can communicate their experiences (Boal, *Theater* 128). Image theatre asks participants to create tableaux – bodies frozen mid-action in order to give the impression of a living

² See Appendix A for an outline of the workshop I proposed.

photograph – to illustrate their experiences. By combining an image theatre workshop with a thematic analysis of the images participants create, scholarly exploration can effectively be combined with embodied experience.

Following the workshop, my plan was to continue my commitment to incorporating bodies into my research by writing a theatrical script which would prepare the conditions for embodied expression in research dissemination. Writing a script is a useful way of both illustrating and critiquing social values and prejudices, as well as exploring possibilities for changing aspects of these values and prejudices that might have detrimental effects on the individuals that live with them.

Unfortunately, seven months after submitting my application, I have yet to receive permission to proceed with the workshop from the military ethics review board. The board requires several layers of approval or permission before they will consider an application. After reviewing my application, the board asked me to clarify some parts of my proposal. I provided this clarification, but by then the time constraints of the project meant that I had to move forward without conducting a workshop. Instead, I have written a script that depicts what might occur in a workshop with women in the military based on published sources that explore these experiences. Some of my sources are academic analyses of evidence gathered in interviews, others are from sources where women reflect on their experiences, and some are combinations of both academic and anecdotal data.

Abby: Sure Grace. That was great.

Grace: But is it the kind of thing you want?

Abby: Well, like I said before, I don't want anything in particular. I want to know what you want to tell me. And that was pretty cool. Alright, let's get started. Welcome back, everyone. *(She looks at Kate.)* I'm glad to see everyone's back. Hi Kate.

Kate: It's a day away from the ship.

Abby: Ok. Well. I saw everyone warmed up, that's good. Today I want to keep exploring your experiences as women in the military. Kinda build on what we did in the last two sessions. Grace just proved that we're ready for full scenes and I know some of you have been working on a few already which I'm excited to see. There's also always those pesky questions I keep in my back pocket if we need inspiration.

Sophia: But you want us to write a play? Do we have to be in it? *(to Mita)* I don't think I'd want to be in a play.

Abby: That's the idea. But of course you don't have to do anything you don't want to do.

Grace: That was on the consent form, remember Sophia? That everything's optional.

Meave: And Kate's been taking full advantage!

Kate looks as though she might respond but stops as Sophia continues.

Sophia: I don't want to be in a play. People might think I'm complaining or something.

Mita: You don't have to be in a play, hon. *(to Abby)* She can do the scenes now but not be in the play, right?

Abby: Sure, if that's what she wants.

Mita: See kid? Nothing to worry about.

Sophia *(still a bit uncertain):* Ok...

Abby: Ok! So last time we talked about the different ways that we could make scenes. Grace just took us through one way. But you can also stage a common memory, or show us a story that happened to you, or explore something that hasn't happened but might be interesting to see embodied. Does anybody have a scene they'd like to share?

Nobody volunteers.

Abby: Ok. Why don't we start with a question? *(She pulls a list of questions out of her pocket and reads from the paper.)* Um, what is the impact of working within an institution of hegemonic masculinity on your day to day lives at work?

Pause as everyone looks confused. All at once:

Meave: Hermegogic whatnow??

Charlie: She's goin' with that educated talk again.

Jen: Was that even English?

Grace (*as everyone else finishes*): ...we have no idea what you just asked us.

Abby: Right. That was a mouthful, wasn't it?

Everyone nods.

In the pages of my script, *Not Quite Soldiers*, I create a world based on the published empirical data mentioned above – academic studies about the lived experiences of women in the military and critical personal narratives by female military personnel themselves. I have undertaken this project in an effort to create a multi-dimensional method of communicating the whole of the experiences I read about, the themes that became apparent in my analysis, my ideas and feelings about the process, and how my own experiences relate to my research. In this fictional world, I explore the impact of gender integration on the military. Additionally, I show the characters experimenting with who they are and exploring how their gender identities impact their jobs.

Ernst van Alphen explores the benefit of examining real life experiences through fictional means in “History’s Other: Oppositional Thought and its Discontents.” While van Alphen’s argument centres on the manner in which history remembers, his ideas about the tension between real and imagined in art also apply to artistic explorations of non-dominant identities like those expressed by women in the military. Discussing the difficulty of remembering the Holocaust, van Alphen writes that, in an attempt to avoid catharsis or closure, people often privilege historical fact based on testimony over artistic representations of real-life events (18). Quoting Saul Friedlander, he notes that

the tension between reality and allegory in art has a distinct effect: “[r]eality is there, in its starkness, but perceived through a filter...of some sort of narrative margin which leaves the unsayable unsaid” (van Alphen 34). Throwing the distinction between fact and fiction into question, the interaction between real and imaginary in art creates the space that is missing in historical narratives, symbolically acknowledging those experiences left outside of dominant cultural discourse. While the “unsayable” remains “unsaid” within this space between reality and allegory, missing experiences are symbolically remembered as the spectator begins to wonder what facts are missing and what they can truly believe is “real.” Art, by refusing to construct unassailable narratives that appear complete, can offer a “truer” account of human experience – one that acknowledges that not everything is recordable.

Although my research was not exclusive to the experiences of women in the navy, in *Not Quite Soldiers* I have made the characters female sailors. In part, this is because I am most familiar with the naval environment and traditions. Additionally, however, it is because the Navy has been a middle ground between the Air Force and the Army when it comes to integrating women. Whereas the Air Force admitted women into most occupations prior to 1989, some Army combat units continue to resist the presence of women despite the 1989 institutional reconfiguration (Reiffenstein 6). The Navy falls somewhere in between these two poles; women were initially employed at shore-based stations, and, prior to 1989, reservist women could sail on ships during the day, as long as they returned to shore overnight (Bennett 53).

Since abandoning my initial idea to hold a workshop, I have altered my focus on bodies in data generation to a focus on preparing the conditions for embodied expression in the data dissemination process. In addition, I have shifted my focus away

from the CF in particular and have included academic research about the United States military as well in order to present a well-rounded picture of the barriers women face in military environments. Although some very strong studies are available, only a small amount of research specifically about the experiences of women in the CF exists. I have included as much research about the Canadian military as I could find.

I am disappointed that my project cannot be as specific as I intended, but I am still able to discuss how women in the military are experiencing their service and how these experiences might be expressed if a workshop were to be possible. In this way, I provide the conceptual framework for, and explain the rationale behind, conducting a theatre workshop with members of the Canadian Forces.

In what follows, I use the experiential themes I have uncovered to inform both the script and the analytic component of my thesis. In the play, I translate my reading and theorizing into concrete expressions of the experiences the characters live, creating texture and context for the themes and experiences I identified in my research. I look at the attitudes and problems that might arise when a group of female military personnel come together and use Boalian techniques to participate in an image theatre workshop. I imagine the experiences of the characters based on my research, and design these experiences to mesh the themes together. In this manner, I show how women's experiences interact with one another to create the world in which the characters live. In alignment with van Alphen's discussion about the power of art to express lived experience, I incorporate theory and my thematic analysis into the script without conducting a direct examination of my intentions in it.

In the analytic component, I begin with Act 1: Gender and the Canadian Forces, in which I provide an overview of the manner in which the CF has approached gender

integration since 1989. Notably, although significant efforts to integrate women into the military have been made, structural barriers that prevent women from achieving the same level of success as their male counterparts still exist.

Act 2: Methodology describes the areas of inquiry that I address in both the script and the analytic component. I discuss the advantages of incorporating the body into scholarly exploration and the role that theatre plays in my work. In this section, I also outline the ideal soldier image that members of the military strive to embody and Boal's concept of the aesthetic space.

In Act 3: *G.I. Jane*? I use a discussion about Jacques Lacan's oedipal structure and his understanding of the way in which language makes meaning, to describe the process by which individual human beings first identify the ideal images which they strive to embody; and to illustrate the uncertainty that arises when these ideals are challenged. I use Homi Bhabha's ideas about mimicry and menace to mine the reasons why military women have difficulty identifying with the "soldier ideal" and the potential for change this difficulty introduces. Finally, I illustrate my engagement with the theory by conducting an analysis of the journey taken by Demi Moore's character, Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil, through Navy SEAL training in Ridley's Scott's 1997 film *G.I. Jane*.

In Act 4: Embodiment and the Third Space, I connect Boal's views on the process of subject formation to my previous discussion about Lacan and Bhabha to illustrate the power of theatre to create change. I discuss the ideal identities that present problems for women who wish to pursue careers in the military. Finally, I propose that all military personnel need to work together in the "aesthetic space" to generate new hybrid military identities using what women have learned in the Third Space. In this way, focus can shift away from whether or not women belong in the military and move toward the

creation of military identities that emphasize characteristics and attributes that are understood as learned behaviours.

Currently, the presence of women in the military and their difficulties identifying with the soldier ideal (Bélanger 163, 165) provide men with a space in which to reinforce their naturalized right to perform – exclusively – the role of soldier in dominant westernized society. Notably, this difficulty likely extends to other “strong” roles such as fire fighter or professional football player. In the space between feminine identities, the soldier ideal and masculine identities, however, women in the military have begun to embody new hybrid gender identities that might be ideally suited to military service. As a consequence of the ability of men to more readily identify with the soldier ideal, only women are occupying the space in which these hybrid gender identities emerge. At this juncture, all members of the military need a space, like that of an image theatre workshop, in which to explore the tension between their identities, and to explore alternative identifications from which new military hybrids can emerge.

Act 1

Gender and the Canadian Forces

In the 22 years since women have been serving in all trades in the Canadian Forces (CF), little research has been conducted about their experiences of military service. In the early years, research about the presence of women in the military focused primarily on men's reactions to and feelings about sharing their jobs with women.¹ By 1999, the pace of research about the integration of women into the CF, whether about the impressions of men or the experiences of women themselves, had slowed dramatically (Davis n.p.). The twentieth anniversary of the integration of women into combat trades in 2009 sparked a slight resurgence in research surrounding gender in the Canadian Forces – this time with more of a focus on the experiences of women themselves – but the results of this research had to contend with discussions about the military's role in Afghanistan, and the centennial celebrations of Canada's navy.

Currently there is little scholarship about the experiences of junior-ranking women who hold the ranks of Ordinary, Able, Leading, or Master Seaman.² Throughout the course of my research, I could only find two published pieces written from the perspective of junior-ranking members.³ Recent research focuses on leadership, with researchers conducting studies where they examine the experiences of female officers in positions of authority to determine the types of leadership styles women employ and to

¹ See for example Karen D. Davis's summary of the surveys conducted prior to, then during, integration "Research and organizational change: women in the Canadian Forces."

² Private, Corporal, or Master Corporal for Army or Air Force personnel. The title Private is applied to the first two rank levels in these elements.

³ Narratives written by Leading Seaman Geneviève Jobin & Private Lorraine van Rensburg, and Leading Seaman (retired) Rose Tanchyk appear in *Transforming Traditions: Women, Leadership, and the Canadian Navy, 1942 – 2010*. Eds. Stéphanie A.H. Bélanger & Karen D. Davis.

evaluate the effectiveness of their leadership overall.⁴ A 2010 Women Leading in Defence conference, “Staking our Claim: The Legacy of Women and Leadership in the Canadian Navy, 1910-2010,” focused on the effectiveness of female leaders within the male-dominated institution of the Navy. These studies focus mainly on the experiences of female officers and senior non-commissioned officers (NCOs)⁵ who occupy leadership positions, and not on junior-ranking non-commissioned members (NCMs). Women have only recently begun to occupy significant positions of authority in the military and it is certainly important to consider how these women have translated their success into the acquisition of senior leadership positions; however, a holistic picture is necessary for thinking about the ways in which the military has and should continue to be transformed – one that includes the junior ranks.

Arguably, the lack of research about the experiences of junior-ranking women might be explained by the higher risk that women at the lowest end of the military hierarchy would have to undertake in order to participate in scholarly research. As individuals with little authority, it might be difficult for junior-ranking women to defend their contributions; if senior personnel did not like what they had to say, there could be career consequences. Yet it is at the beginning of a military career when individuals hold the lowest ranks that propriety can, at times, be discarded in favour of seemingly innocent actions which test the boundaries of military professionalism as young men and women try to reconcile their image of military life with the reality of it.

⁴ See the essay by Lisa A. Boyce & Ann M. Herd for an analysis of how gender role stereotypes affect perceptions of the effectiveness of military leaders. See Karen D. Davis’s 2009 book and Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger & Davis’s 2010 book for collections of essays from female military leaders about their experiences.

⁵ Officers hold ranks of Acting Sub-Lieutenant and above. NCOs hold ranks of Petty Officer Second Class and above.

The interactions between individuals of different genders in the junior ranks are indicative of the expectations individuals had of military life prior to their enrolment. These interactions function to place recruits into previously defined roles that both the individuals themselves and their colleagues can expect to play throughout their careers. Military life is unique in that, throughout their careers, co-workers will share both living and work spaces, and sometimes these spaces can overflow into one another. In my time as a junior-ranking member of the Royal Canadian Naval Reserves, I have observed instances in which men test their female colleagues by referencing pornographic images, making sexist jokes, or by discussing heterosexual intercourse. In my experience, these tests more commonly occur on courses or during time at sea when groups are thrown together in both living and work space. While most of the time these actions are not intended to cause harm, it is during these interactions that social expectations within the Navy are performed, tested, and reified. Women are expected to accept their colleagues' behaviour since, when a single woman appears offended, it may be interpreted as a sign that women as a gender cannot adapt to the male-dominated world of the military (Mulkins 38; Speiser-Blanchet 51; Taber 292).

The performative tests I mention above contribute to the creation of the space women are expected to occupy in the military and create a complicated complicity in which women help to maintain the subtle sexism within military structure (Reiffenstein 5). Donna Winslow and Jason Dunn argue that militaries must tackle prejudice on two fronts if they want to achieve full integration. First, militaries must legally revise policies such as restrictions on employment and the factors influencing career advancement (642). Next, they must work at a social level to alter dominant ideological perceptions that dictate that women do not have a place in combat (Winslow & Dunn, 642). Ideally,

integration leads to equal opportunities for career advancement and social parity amongst men and women. Despite its reputation as a leader in the integration of women into its military, however, Canada's Army, Navy, and Air Force have yet to fully overcome the barriers that prevent women from performing the same tasks as men without having to deal with social prejudice that can affect career progression and promotions (Winslow & Dunn, 642).

Abby: Um, ok. Well, there's an image of what a soldier looks like, an idea that'll pop into people's heads when they hear the word, right? And, arguably, that image is of a man because, until recently, only men have been allowed into combat trades, right? So, what I'm asking is, since there's a sense that you're doing a "man's job," does the fact that you're women and not men impact things at all?

Kate scoffs and rolls her eyes.

Grace: C'mon Kate, give it a chance.

Kate folds her arms across her chest and shakes her head.

Charlie: I see what you're askin' there. We're after workin' on a scene that might answer your question. *(She begins to set up a bathroom scene with two stalls facing the audience and an area for sinks and mirrors.)* It's the one in the heads, b'ys. With Sean and Mike. *(Jen nods, remembering.)*

Abby: Heads?

Charlie: Bathroom. *(She sits down on one of the 'toilets'.)*

Jen (to Grace): You were the guy who opens the canteen.

Grace goes to the opposite side of the stage and creates a canteen: a storeroom type area with a counter and goods displayed behind it.

Charlie: And there were some hangin' around the canteen til' it opens. I'll be me.

Jen: And I'll be Sean, Mita was Mike

The scene begins as Charlie steadies herself against the motion of the ship in the bathroom stall. Bracing her arms on the walls beside her would work. Also, she could have both feet planted on the ground as her body moves with the ship. This steadying action is less pronounced in the other characters but is still present.

Jen, as Sean, and **Mita**, as Mike, enter the heads to wash their hands, chatting. Mike looks up to Sean and goes along with what he's saying to fit in. Sean thinks Mike is kind of dumb.

Jen/Sean: I can't believe the black water was clogged again! If I find one more tampon jamming it up I'm sending the girls in to fix it!

Charlie: Oh crap. *(Sean and Mike hear her but don't pay much attention.)*

Mita/Mike *(laughing)*: I know, right? But Sean...it wasn't a tampon this time!

Jen/Sean: Whatever. Might as well've been.

Mita/Mike *(finishing up)*: Yeah. Might as well've been.

Mita/Mike *dries her hands and leaves the scene.*

Charlie: Uh...hello?

Jen/Sean: What?

Charlie: Who's that?

Jen/Sean: Uh, Sean.

Charlie: *(to herself)* Crap, Sean?! *(to Sean)* Hey, it's Charlie. So...what's up, b'y?

Jen/Sean *(drying her hands and preparing to leave)*: I know you girls are into that whole chatting in the bathroom thing, but it's not something the rest of us really do...

Charlie: Wait! Don't leave! I need you to do something for me?

Grace: Hold on. *(Everyone stops.)* Charlie, Mike didn't leave the heads.

Charlie: What? He did!

Mita: Yeah. I'm pretty sure he left.

Grace: No, he can't've. He asked me for a tampon in the flats *(remembering Abby)* um, hallway, that day. Actually, you were there, Mita.

Mita: Ooooooh yeah. Grace is right, Charlie. Sean pushed him into me.

Charlie: Ok, I trust ya! Let's get back to it.

Abby: Wait a sec though. You share bathrooms?

Charlie: Only on the smaller ships. Like what the Reserves use. Limited space.

Abby: Ah, ok.

While the legal barriers to gender integration in the CF are mostly gone, some of the social barriers remain, and the CF is aware of that. In “International Women’s Day promotes equal opportunity,” Lesley Craig quotes Lieutenant Commander (LCdr) Evelyn Zandvliet, the military co-chair of the Defence Women’s Advisory Organization. In the article, LCdr Zandvliet acknowledged that structural barriers in the CF continue to prevent women from reaching the same level of accomplishment as their male counterparts:

We’ve made great strides, but we still need to remind people that issues still exist, and they’re going on with women a lot more often than people think...

...Sometimes, managers are not aware that they’re putting things in place that are stumbling blocks. They really don’t realize it, so the issues can be systemic as opposed to local. (Craig 3)

The CF, or at least the parts of it tasked with working toward gender integration, is aware of the fact that barriers to the integration of women still exist. These restrictive barriers are derived from the way in which legal and social expectations within the military are interpreted and acted on by individuals who reject the idea of gender integration. It is important to note that often individuals will not be consciously aware of how their behaviour works against integration – they are simply employing behaviours acquired as individuals observe the military culture around them.⁶ It is only by identifying and engaging with these limiting concepts and definitions that gender

⁶ See for example Carol Cohn’s essay on standards discourse, “How Can She Claim Equal Rights When She Doesn’t Have to Do as Many Push-ups as I Do?: The Framing of Men’s Opposition to Women’s Equality in the Military.”

integration can become a reality. At this point, as Winslow & Dunn note, “[m]uch of the debate is rooted in attitudes, and changes in laws and regulations will not automatically alter social tradition” (642).

Of course, progress toward gender integration has been made with varying degrees of success across the Canadian Forces. Prior to 1971, women employed by the military were discharged if they got married or became pregnant, and could not enrol in the Regular Officer Training Program (Davis n.p.). Before the 1989 Canadian Human Rights Tribunal, women could not serve in combat roles, and, until 2000, women were not allowed to serve on submarines (Davis n.p.). It is true that many units in the Air Force have equal numbers of men and women successfully performing the same tasks on a daily basis, but many Army units have yet to accept their first female officer (Reiffenstein, 6-7).

The legal barriers to women’s participation in military combat have slowly been removed, but the fact that women are successfully performing the same tasks as their male colleagues is not necessarily indicative of successful gender integration. It is the negative social aspects of integration – the interpersonal relationships and interactions between individuals in the CF – that now need to be identified and tackled in order to achieve a more complete integration. Not only should research consider the type of leadership style that will contribute to further integration, it should also solicit the views of the junior ranks.

Act 2

Methodology

Charlie: So...um...I guess you come back to the scene, Jen. Uh... *(She looks at Abby for direction.)*

Abby: Why don't you take it from your 'hello,' Charlie.

Jen and Mita go back to the sink. **Jen** is just finishing up and **Mita** is still mid-hand wash.

Charlie: Ok. Uh...hello?

Mita/Sean: What?

Charlie: Who's that?

Mita/Sean: Uh, Sean.

Jen/Mike: And Mike!

Charlie: *(to herself)* Crap, Sean?! *(to Sean)* Hey, it's Charlie. So...what's up, b'ys?

Mita/Sean *(drying her hands and preparing to leave):* I know you girls are into that whole chatting in the bathroom thing, but it's not something the rest of us really do...

Charlie: Wait! Don't leave! I need you to do something for me?

Mita/Sean: What?

Charlie: I need a favour. A tampon. I need a tampon.

Mita/Sean: ...yeah...?

Charlie: And I don't have one with me.

Jen/Mike: ...yeah...?

Charlie: I'm after telling ya what I need! *(Pause.)* One of the other girls might have one!

Mita/Sean: No, noooo way! I am NOT going around asking for tampons.

Jen/Mike: No way. Me neither!

Mita/Sean: You shoulda stocked up last time we were alongside.

Charlie: Where to? In that one-horse Cape Breton town? We've been out here longer then we were 'sposed to be. I'm all out. Please, Sean. We're in the middle of the ocean.
Someone's gotta have one.

Mita/Sean: Nope, not gonna happen.

Charlie: I'll take your next foreign port duty watch.

Jen/Mike (to Mita): Make her do three!

Mita/Sean: My next three foreign port duty watches.

Charlie: Not a chance of it.

Mita/Sean: Well, ok then. Guess me'n Mike'll just be leavin'.

Charlie: I'll do two, but not three.

Mita/Sean: Well – fine. Don't go anywhere.

Mita/Sean starts to leave the heads.

Mita/Sean (to Jen/Mike): You're coming with me dimwit.

Jen/Mike: What? But she's not doing my watches!

Mita/Sean: Let's go.

*They enter the flats (hallway), and see a crowd consisting of **Grace, Sophia,** and **Meave** hanging around the canteen.*

Mita/Sean: There you go, Mike. Go ask them.

Jen/Mike: I'm not askin' them! You ask them!

Mita/Sean: No, you're gonna do it.

Jen/Mike: No way. Just try and buy some when the canteen opens.

*Mita/Sean pushes Jen/Mike toward the group. She stumbles into **Meave/Dave.***
Mita/Sean saunters up.

Meave/Dave: Got a problem with your sea legs there, Mike?

Jen/Mike: Heh, no. You got a problem with yours? (*Meave shakes her head.*)

Pause.

Jen/Mike: Sooooo...anyone have any spare tampons lying around?

Sophia: Sorry, I'm all out!

Grace: Me too.

Grace exits.

Meave/Dave: Why the hell would I have a tampon? Of course, I can understand why *you* might need one...

Jen/Mike: Uh...it's not me! Sean! Gets nosebleeds!

Mita/Sean (*punching Jen/Mike*): Asshole. (*Raising her voice.*) Actually, my nose is just fine, boys!

Sophia exits. Grace re-enters as Carl and 'opens' the canteen. The waiting group expresses their happiness ['Finally some cigarettes!' 'I'm dying for a chocolate bar' 'C'mon man we've been waiting here for ages!'] Grace/Carl can respond with something like 'Yeah yeah yeah well I'm open now.' Jen/Mike buys something and bolts away before Mita/Sean can catch her. Mita/Sean loiters until everyone has made their purchases then approaches the counter.

Grace/Carl: Hey.

Mita/Sean: Hey. (*Pause.*) See the Canucks game?

Grace/Carl: Yeah.

Pause.

Grace/Carl: Well...what can I get for you?

Mita/Sean (*whispers*): I need to buy some tampons...They're not for me!

Grace/Carl (*laughs*): I thought you were pretty grouchy earlier today. (*Pause.*) You really want me to sell you (*lowers her voice*) tampons?!

Mita/Sean: Yeah. Just hurry up and do it already!

Grace/Carl (*recovering*): Can't help ya. I got cigarettes and I got condoms. Not that you'll need any of those!

Mita/Sean: Shut up.

Grace/Carl: No tampons. *(They look at each other awkwardly for a moment then Grace/Carl closes the canteen and Mita/Sean leaves, making her way back to the heads.)*

Sophia approaches.

Sophia: Hey. Jen told me you were looking for a tampon?

Mita/Sean: Yeah. But it's not for me! It's for Charlie, ok?!

Sophia: Wow, calm down! I'm out, but I have these. *(She hands Mita/Sean a box of pantliners).* Tell her to use as many as she needs.

Mita/Sean: OHTHANKGOD.

Sophia exits and **Mita/Sean** returns to the heads.

Mita/Sean: Charlie?

Charlie: That was some wait, Sean.

Mita/Sean: No tampons. Sophia gave me these. *(She passes the box 'under' the stall).*

Charlie *(after a moment):* These are for thongs.

Mita/Sean: Ok.

Charlie: I'm not wearing a thong.

Mita/Sean: She said to use as many as you need. *(Mita leaves the scene while Charlie looks dumbfounded and the scene ends.)*

At the 2010 Women Leading in Defence conference "Staking our Claim: The Legacy of Women and Leadership in the Canadian Navy, 1910 – 2010," I found myself in a room full of "firsts" including, significantly, both the first female Commander Naval Reserve, and the first female Commanding Officer of a major warship in Canada. As I listened to presentations by women in the military and researchers alike, I wondered if bringing the stories I was hearing together and looking at the similarities in experiences between them might help to identify the institutional practices that make a career in the

military challenging for women. More importantly, I asked what might come out of such a process that would result in a better understanding of the kinds of practices and policies that would support gender integration.

At the conference, I identified two areas of inquiry that I now explore. Within the scope of this project, I first considered the similarities and differences in the experiences that women in the military have written about. While each of the stories military servicewomen share is important on its own, a comparative analysis of the similarities and differences in each published narrative revealed overlapping experiences that are indicative of common experiences that military women share. After mining my sources, I translated my analysis of common themes and experiences into a theatrical script. My second concern is how the bodies of female military personnel both absorb and influence their experiences. Bodies play a role that is so integral to the experiences of women in the military that removing bodies from the methods of both generating and disseminating data would not effectively capture the experiences I wish to explore.

Recent research supports the idea of incorporating the body into academic study. D. Soyini Madison argues for the importance of acknowledging embodied understanding as a legitimate means of generating and disseminating research, noting that performance is the process through which human beings “come to simultaneously recognize, substantiate, and (re)create ourselves as well as Others” (150). Since the early 1970s, performance studies practitioners have been exploring such alternative methods of distributing qualitative data. Methods such as devising plays,¹ “Playbuilding”,² and Augusto Boal’s “Theater of the oppressed” challenge traditional concepts of academic

¹ See Virginie Magnat, and Warren Linds & Elinor Vettraino for analyses of the advantages of devising theatre.

² Joe Norris offers an experiential analysis of the playbuilding process in *Playbuilding as Qualitative Research: A Participatory Arts-Based Approach*.

scholarship, arguing that empirical knowledge must be explored in conjunction with experiential knowledge in order to uncover understandings that are more effectively conveyed by the body than through verbal or written language.

To research for this project, I collected stories and observations from two sources: academic texts that examine women's experiences, and firsthand narratives from women in the military which include published texts, academic conference presentations, and a blog. The academic papers are drawn from studies conducted in Canada and the United States. Of the personal narratives, only one – a blog by a writer who calls herself “Army Girl, Army Wife” – is written by a non-Canadian. Several of the personal narratives are drawn from two collections of essays,³ and some are from published journals.

Another source, my own experiences after nine years of ongoing service in the Naval Reserves, only became apparent as I read and identified with the data in the other types of sources. I had not considered my own experiences particularly relevant to many of the sources I was reading. Several of them are reflexive narratives about experiences that took place in the mid- to late-nineties that the authors have learned from as they progressed in their careers. I expected to find that experiences had changed over time; that the experiences of my cohort would differ from those of the women who went before us. In my identifications with what I read, however, I realized that many similarities remain in the way women experience their service. One evening, for example, a mixed-gender group of colleagues and I were socializing in the mess and we began to talk about the possibility of deploying to Afghanistan. A female colleague and I

³ Karen D. Davis's 2009 collection *Women and Leadership in the Canadian Forces: Perspectives and Experience* and her 2010 collaboration with Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger *Transforming Traditions: Women, Leadership & the Canadian Navy, 1942 – 2010*.

joked that we were safe because we could simply “get pregnant” to avoid deployments. Similarly, in Nancy Taber’s narrative, she recalled that the belief among Sea King helicopter crews that women who did not want to deploy could avoid six-months at sea simply by becoming pregnant (and making a life-long commitment to a child) was widely held (297). In the mess that evening, my response to my colleagues’ discussion about deployment betrayed my own unconscious absorption of this belief: one still prevalent within the military. In this instance, and many others like it, my experiences mirrored those of the women in the narratives I read. The similarities between my own experiences and those described in my sources highlight specific behaviours and beliefs in the military that have not been addressed and should not continue to go unnoticed.⁴

On my first reading of the texts in the research process, I made broad observations about the major themes and ideas that were evident in them, and compared the experiences described in the texts to identify common themes. I then returned to the texts and isolated descriptions that related to four themes: *kinship*, *space*, *attitudes*, and *bodies*. I further subdivided each theme into several sub-themes that could be discussed independently. In *kinship*, I looked for ideas about roles in traditional families, motherhood, and language surrounding female warriors. *Space* remained relatively broad and I applied it to any mention of the physical space – space women occupy or space from which they are excluded – in the work environment. I split *attitudes* into three parts: the reception of women by military men, the reception of women by military wives, and the actions of female military personnel in response to these attitudes. Finally, I subdivided *bodies* into three categories: general, physical

⁴ I do not mean to imply that workplace conditions have not improved for women in the military. Countless improvements have been made, and many women enjoy long, fulfilling careers, overcoming the hurdles that remain with a sense of humour and a thick skin.

training (PT), and image of the soldier which I further subdivided into women's (self) perceptions of this role and outsider perceptions of this role.

I selected the four broad themes discussed above in different ways. *Kinship* was a theme that was not immediately apparent to me in the sources I read. Following my initial reading, I returned to my notes from the "Staking our Claim" conference, where I had observed that familial obligation was an idea that had come up frequently. I initially thought that it was interesting that kinship had been emphasized at the conference but did not seem to come up in my sources. On my second reading, however, I realized that many of my sources did mention family, but I had not noticed it. In part, I suspect that this is because I do not yet have a family of my own. It became clear that familial obligations and the prevalent expectation that women put their families ahead of their careers are important issues to many women in the military. I called the theme *kinship* to make room for non-traditional families, if they came up, and so that it could include discourse that portrays relationships between members of the military as family.

On my initial reading, I noticed that many of the narratives and essays mentioned the use of *space*. In an entry titled "How to protect yourself from creepy guys while deployed," Army Girl, Army Wife blogged about how to stay safe when deployed overseas with a predominantly male force (3 Mar 11), and, in her article, Nancy Taber discussed how the lack of female changing facilities on a course she took resulted in herself and her female course mates changing in the equipment room (294). Major Jamie Speiser-Blanchet noted that receiving a room of her own because there were no other women to share a room with her was perceived as special treatment (52), and I remembered my own disorienting experience of entering a female bathroom full of urinals and having to double check that I was in the right place. The experiences go on.

In a culture where women are constructed as vulnerable to predatory males and sex segregation is common practice for any activity that involves nudity, the manner in which spaces initially designed for men are (not) altered to accommodate women underscores the experiences of women in the military today.

Attitudes was a theme that emerged as I recorded instances of how women relate to their image of themselves as soldiers. Narratives included the reactions of women's colleagues and of members of the public to their roles in the military. *Attitudes* seemed to be a fitting category name because it can contain the impressions of women that do not specifically relate to their own images of themselves as members of the military; the opinions of people other than the women themselves; and the behaviours that seem to come out of the attitudes that were discussed. For example, many of the authors expressed a sense that they have been subject to closer scrutiny throughout their careers simply by virtue of fact that their gender makes them more visible (e.g. Mulkins 35; Speiser-Blanchet 51; Reiffenstein 4). Several of these authors also noted that they did not want the institution to change to accommodate them. The attitude that women joined a male institution and should therefore be prepared to meet the standards that existed before their arrival was also a common theme that came up in essays by Angela R. Febraro (117), Carol Cohn (143-144), and Leading Seaman Rose Tanchyk (49).

Bodies was a theme I wished to explore from the beginning of my project and I found that, whether it was a complaint about ill-fitting uniforms (Army Girl, Army Wife 22 Apr 11), or recalling a story about men making comments about women's weight or appearance (Mondelli 123; Taber 293), or expressing discomfort with directly identifying with the trappings of the soldier/sailor identity (Bélanger 164), bodies were discussed in many of my sources. This provided me with a way of considering the role of

the body in the experiences of female military personnel without the requirement of seeing these bodies interact. To a certain degree, then, no form of research is body-less.

In everyday interactions, speech rarely acts without the presence and participation of at least one body. In some instances, collecting data in interviews and disseminating it in writing gives speech and language a privilege that it does not enjoy in everyday life, perpetuating an Enlightenment-era model, in which the mind thinks for the body instead of the mind and body working together. What is lost when bodies are left out of research is the texture and context of the moment, and this, in turn, contributes to a loss of meaning. To clarify, I am referring to meaning – such as the power dynamic between people or how one person feels about another – held in the way bodies interact and express themselves. This meaning is not necessarily consciously known or willingly articulated by the individual, and so it is meaning that it is difficult to draw out of an interview. It is meaning that can be missed.

It is crucial that the growing amount of qualitative research about women in the military begin to incorporate bodies into the process of data generation and dissemination, because it is the addition of identifiably female bodies to an organization built by and for men that has made this research necessary. Furthermore, the military regulates and controls bodies in a very specific manner, emphasizing the importance of disciplined bodies in performing the tasks soldiers must undertake. Judith Butler, who builds on the work of Michel Foucault, argues that the process of disciplining bodies at once “*manages and makes use of*” individuals, and “*actively constitutes them*” (50, emphasis in original). Thus, female bodies in the military have created change and met with resistance passively, through their mere presence, while they are simultaneously constituted in the same way male bodies have been for centuries.

The question now becomes: what do people know through their bodies? In everyday life, bodies express emotions a person may or may not consciously register. For example, body language can show when someone feels unprotected or comfortable, or where someone stands in the social hierarchy of a particular group. On a smaller scale, many people will always step off with the same foot, lean forward when offering their hand to shake, or feel uncomfortable if they cross their arms in the opposite way from that which they are used to. When people are asked to become aware of how their bodies interact by consciously staging them in tableaux with a group, repeated actions, movements, or habits once learned through observation, mimicry, and adaptation to external stimuli can be identified and analysed thematically (Boal, *Theater* 126, 128).

Try this: trace the shape of a cross in the air with your left hand. Stop making the cross. Now, trace the shape of a circle in the air with your right hand. Stop that motion as well so that your hands are stationary. Trace the shapes in the air with both hands at the same time, your left hand tracing the shape of a cross and your right hand tracing the shape of the circle. Augusto Boal used this exercise, “The cross and the circle,” to help participants in his workshops become aware of the patterns in which their bodies have been conditioned to move (*Games* 62). In this case, participants learn that both hands habitually make the same motion at the same time, making it difficult to simultaneously move both hands in different patterns. Boal notes that tracing the different shapes with both hands at the same time is almost impossible (*Games* 62).

Critics of qualitative research often consider the lack of quantifiable data in qualitative projects reason enough to dismiss them. However, this critique ignores the power of quantitative projects, especially those that involve performance, to transform data into “living research” (Norris 33). Joe Norris describes “living research” as research

in which “recipients...merge their opinions and stories with those of the [performers],” creating a dialogue between researcher and reader (33). Theatre creates the conditions in which people can become self-reflexive about their actions and begin to consciously manipulate their behaviours in creative and emancipatory ways. In the process, individuals solicit similar behavioural changes from the people around them. Changing people’s interactions changes the world around them as they begin to solicit new reactions from those individuals with whom they interact.

When I pursued my initial project, I aimed to incorporate the body into both the processes of collecting data as well as disseminating data. In the image theatre workshop I proposed, participants would employ image theatre techniques to create tableaux in response to questions I posed to the group. This would help to reveal those embodied practices that have been naturalized through repetition in the daily lives of participants. Turning my focus away from the physically present bodies of my originally proposed project, I have shifted to thinking about how bodies are implied in both written sources and data dissemination. Though physically absent on the page, the recorded stories female military personnel share imply the type of body that they are not – the male soldier.

Karen D. Davis and Brian McKee write that the largest hurdle facing women in the military today stems from the female body’s inability to fit into the pervasive social and cultural vision of the warrior in westernized societies. They summarize work done by Judith Youngman, beginning with the observation that “historically, the warrior is understood to be male” (Davis & McKee 67). This observation reveals a general societal expectation that soldiers are male. Davis and McKee continue by listing characteristics that warriors are “assumed to share” such as “superior physical and moral attributes,

aggressive nature, proclivity to violence, rite of passage marked by physical prowess, ‘will to kill’, [sic] masculinity, and embodiment of virtue” (67). While the characteristics of the warrior Davis and McKee list are attributes that female soldiers can conceivably acquire, it is certainly more difficult for individuals who identify as female to successfully embody the historically derived ideal toward which members of the military learn to strive.

Not surprisingly, an equally dominant trope that describes a female warrior ideal does not exist. Dominant social constructions of women in westernized societies have forged strong connections between women and the home or family, and fostered images of women as emotionally and physically vulnerable. In fact, social expectations about women as “weak” in comparison to men can have an impact on women’s bodies. Davis and McKee discuss a study conducted in 2000 by the UK Ministry of Defence. The study concluded that overall, women were significantly weaker than men (Davis & McKee 58). With training, however, women met and sometimes exceeded the same standards as men (Davis & McKee 58). Women’s lower initial fitness levels can be linked to the differences in social expectations surrounding fitness (Davis & McKee 57, 58). While men are encouraged to visibly display their strength by developing muscle definition, the ideal image of a woman’s body as, for example, thin discourages such development in women.

Lieutenant-Commander Lynn Bradley notes that the attitude that women are not suited to life at sea (and, by extension, the battlefield) persisted amongst some male crew members after integration had begun (175). Bradley interviewed men who occupied leadership positions on some of the first Canadian warships onto which women were integrated and found that some of these male military leaders noted that

mixed-gender “ships’ companies were ‘better behaved’, [sic] and that there ‘was more of a *family* atmosphere” onboard (179; my emphasis). The ties between “woman” and family continue to influence both women’s behaviour and leaders’ understanding of the interactions between men and women in the military.

Angela R. Febraro describes characteristics attributed to female leaders that are linked to gender-role stereotypes throughout her article. These include: “person-oriented” leadership characteristics (99), approaching problem-solving by listening (100), “peace-support” and a “co-operative style” (101), “interpersonal skills” (104), and “developing or *empowering* others” (104, emphasis in original). In contrast, male leadership styles are considered “task-oriented” (99), active (100), aggressive (101), and “command-based” styles (101). Febraro notes that her female interviewees all describe effective leaders as those that possess an “androgynous” mix of characteristics that they can apply as the situation requires (105). Nevertheless, in a study of United States Air Force Academy (USAFA) cadets’ understanding of good leadership qualities, Lisa A. Boyce and Ann M. Herd found that male cadets’ perceptions of “male” characteristics as effective in military leadership grow stronger the more exposure they have to military life at the Academy (375).⁵ The link between aggressive masculinity and the soldier is difficult to break, and it appears that, no matter how women themselves perceive their own effectiveness as military leaders, the opinions of those around them prove more difficult to change.

Davis and McKee express concern about the prevalence of warrior discourse in “post-modern” militaries in which, in addition to combat, the focus is often on domestic

⁵ Significantly, Boyce and Herd found that, like in Febraro’s study, female cadets listed both male and female leadership characteristics when asked to define an effective leader (372).

and peacetime operations, and humanitarian aid missions (54-55). Indeed, Canada's participation in the war in Afghanistan has led to an assertion within the military organization that all members of the CF are "soldiers first," a catchphrase that is reiterated on a regular basis (Bélanger 157, 160). This mantra foregrounds Canada's role in combat, and emphasizes the need for personnel to develop the warrior characteristics Davis and McKee discuss. Warrior characteristics are not required to perform all military tasks, and yet an emphasis on "superior physical...attributes" could result in individuals who could work in a variety of non-combat trades being passed over in the recruiting process (Davis & McKee 55, 67). Too much emphasis on hyper-masculine warrior culture may lead to the exclusion of individuals, no matter what gender they identify with, whose presence would benefit the institution.

Given the importance of ideal and actual bodies to the exploration of women's experiences of military service, I have written a script based on the data I have collected. Although my focus on bodies remains, for the moment, ephemeral, I have begun to create the conditions in which the participation of bodies in my research is necessary by disseminating data in the script. Using a theatrical script to distribute research findings offers a way to address the power imbalance between researcher and participant often perpetuated through, for example, discipline-specific language in academic publishing and the unidirectional flow of information. The creation of a script provides audiences with a text that is not discipline-specific and can be used and understood by individuals outside of academic spheres – most significantly, by those individuals that it depicts. In this manner, the means of production can be accessed and expressed by those who live the experiences that are being researched, allowing the dialogue between research and participant to evolve beyond the final written piece produced by the researcher.

Furthermore, scriptwriting acknowledges the experience of the body that is often conspicuously absent in academic research that is specifically interested in exploring the embodied experiences of human beings such as personal interviews or medical research about sexual arousal.

Play scripts contain elements of both “the actual and the imaginary” (Norris 28), which come together to create plausible worlds. In playworlds, elements of many stories are combined into one text, highlighting those experiences that are commonly expressed by the storytellers. Although the story in a script is imagined, the events and experiences depicted within the story are grounded in lived experience. As Joe Norris notes, “research-informed arts,” such as plays, employ empirical data from real world events and interactions to create imaginary scenarios, maintaining “a high degree of loyalty to the actual” in the process (18). Like Ernst van Alphen’s tension between reality and allegory, the resulting interplay between what is and what could be in the playworld facilitates a creative exploration of the potential result of implementing change before it is actually implemented. The script’s connection to lived reality grounds imaginative exploration. Theatre acknowledges and emphasizes the impact of the body on everyday experiences that other methods of collecting data, such as interviews, might miss.

It is the relationship between the plausibility of events in plays and the space in which they occur that produces a real potential for change. In production, plays unfold in spaces that can be *physically explored* in the consequence-free environment of the playworld. In these “concrete dreams,” individuals can put their imaginations to the test in physical space where the laws of physics (e.g. gravity) that govern everyday life still apply (Boal, *Rainbow* 21). In this manner, spectators and actors can occupy one space that is, was, and could be all at once (Boal, *Rainbow* 22). At the same time, however,

they remain aesthetically removed from the outcome of their experiments. Daniel Feldhändler describes the theatrical aesthetic space, detailed by Boal, as space that is both “fiction and reality at the same time. Aesthetic space *is* and, at the same time, is *not*. It is a place where time and space, even people and objects, can be unfolded, condensed, and changed. In other words, through this plasticity, memory and imagination interplay creatively” (94, emphasis in original). While there may be consequences for a character’s actions in the world of the play, once the play ends, these consequences do not significantly alter the real world which the actors and spectators inhabit unless these individuals decide to produce change themselves by modifying their behaviour. Often, it is only once people have seen that other ways of being are possible within plausible worlds that this change occurs.

Grace (to Abby): We’re not even supposed to wear thongs!

Abby: What??

Sophia: Is that an actual rule though?

Grace: Well I’m not sure if it’s an actual rule...but I heard we weren’t allowed to wear them at basic...

Jen: I mighta seen it written down somewhere. Don’t remember where. Wearing bras is a rule though!

Kate: Who cares? Why would you want to wear a thong anyway?

Mita: I like to feel secretly sexy from time to time!

Kate: Gross.

Marie-Josée: Actually, they’re pretty comfortable.

Kate: Whatever.

Grace: Regardless, I wouldn’t be surprised if it *was* an actual rule...

Abby: Probably something you guys should look up, eh?

Jen (*laughing*): Yeah, maybe!

Abby: Charlie, I'm a bit confused about your scene. I mean, you all seemed to think the whole situation was kinda funny.

Charlie: Yeah.

Jen: It *was* pretty funny!

Abby: Really? I think it'd be kind of mortifying. And the way those guys treated you is appalling.

Kate: What?

Marie-Josée: No, that's just part of life on ship.

Charlie: People make fun of each other. It relieves the tension. I mean, I could tell you a story about what happened to Sean a few days later that's probably just as 'mortifying' as mine was.

Abby: But still, don't you think it's...degrading.

Sophia: No!

Grace: We have to have a sense of humour about these things!

Abby: Wow, I can't, I mean, I'd think behaviour like that should be addressed.

Kate: Behaviour like wh-

Marie-Josée cuts Kate off by placing her hand on Kate's elbow.

Marie-Josée: I don't think you're understanding, Abby.

Abby: I-

Mita: It's not like that sort of thing happens a lot.

Jen: And it's not that the guys purposely don't stock tampons in the canteen. They just don't think of it.

Abby: Can't you do anything about it?

Kate: We don't need special treatment.

Abby: And asking them to consider the fact that you might need tampons at some point is special treatment?

Marie-Josée: It could be seen that way.

Limitations to what I can uncover about the experiences of women in the military exist because of the way in which I have approached my project. To begin with, the limited number of sources available that examine women's experiences in a specifically Canadian context means that I have incorporated sources that discuss the American military as well. In so doing, I rely on the similarities between Canadian and American society. The analogous experiences described by women in sources from both countries supports this move. Differences do exist, of course, especially since debate about whether or not to allow women to take up combat roles in the military still rages in the US (Davis & McKee 54). Through the efforts of academics like Karen D. Davis and Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger, I am confident that the amount of research about women in the Canadian military will continue to grow.

The published sources I worked with were tailored specifically to certain topics. In Davis and Bélanger's *Transforming Traditions: Women, Leadership, and the Canadian Navy, 1942-2010*, for instance, contributors used their experiences to reflect on effective leadership practices. Relying on these sources means that I could not ask for clarification or about specific issues as I could have in a workshop. Luckily, in most of the reflexive sources I found, authors approached their subjects of analysis by describing moments in which they faced and overcame adversity. This meant that personal experience remained at the forefront of my research.

My reliance on written sources also means that I lose access to embodied knowledge –knowledge that is held in the body and developed through repeated actions

based on circumstance, habit, instinct, and intuition. Instead, I have started to prepare the conditions for adding bodies to the academic conversation about women in the military by writing a script. In addition, by considering my own experiences in relation to the ones in the published sources, I begin to think about how my own physical reactions might have been shaped by my military experience.

Act 3

G.I. Janes?

A challenge to the soldier ideal arises when women in the military deviate, as they must, from the specifically masculine gender profile of the soldier. As women strive toward the soldier ideal, they work toward embodying a masculine gender profile. In the process, women move away from the feminine ideal which female bodies are expected to display, placing the female body at odds with the naturalized ideal of women as, for example, caring and nurturing.

As I argue above, despite the success of women in the military, the reinforcement of male attributes historically associated with the soldier subject position continues to present a significant challenge to gender integration. The conflict produced by the challenge women in the military present to established gender identities often results in damaging consequences for the women themselves. In male-dominated environments, where women are more likely to be evaluated by men against male standards, women's efforts to act like men are often perceived negatively, even when they are simply employing the same leadership techniques as their male colleagues (Febbraro 95). Ironically, however, no single body (male, female, or otherwise) can actually reach an ideal subject position because, as I, following many others, will argue, these ideals do not actually exist.

Within the boundaries of Jacques Lacan's description of subject formation and the symbolic order¹ in which we live our day-to-day lives, Homi Bhabha's elaboration of

¹ The symbolic order is made up of the interplay between the oedipal structure and language – Lacan's "Law" (Butler 43; Silverman 172). The interaction between these concepts organizes the expectations that society places on subjects and creates the space within which subjects must negotiate their identities

the concept of “mimicry” helps to reveal the framework through which identities are established, striven towards, and challenged. I begin this section with a description of the process of mimicry and of the Lacanian oedipal structure. Following this, I discuss the role of language in maintaining the boundaries setup by the oedipal structure and introduce Bhabha’s concept of “menace.” Finally, I illustrate how both Lacan and Bhabha’s theories function in relation to the challenges female soldiers face by discussing how the theory applies to Demi Moore’s character, Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil, in *G.I. Jane* (Scott 1997).

In his definition of “mimicry,” Bhabha offers a way in which to understand the reason why women will never really be permitted to become soldiers, conceptually remaining only imperfect approximations of the ideal. Mimicry occurs when the dominant group within a society appears to successfully inhabit a subject position that has become a naturalized ideal; and members of minority groups strive to embody that ideal as well (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 86).² In the case of the military, mimicry can be seen to operate in the relationship between women, men, and the soldier ideal. Like the inability of female soldiers to signify as male, in mimicry, some obvious characteristic of individuals in the minority group, such as skin colour, prevents them from fully embodying the ideal (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 86). This allows the dominant group to

(Silverman 172, 181). Subjects can only identify and describe themselves, and recognize others, from within the symbolic order in which human beings live their day-to-day lives.

² Bhabha writes about mimicry and menace in the context of the relationship of dominance and subjugation between colonized subjects and the colonizers. I borrow his concepts and apply them to the relationship of dominance and subjugation between men and women in the military. I recognize that the contexts of each application vary greatly. Directly transferring Bhabha’s ideas from the context of identities that emerge from the imposition of one culture’s beliefs and practices onto another to the context of my research is certainly complicated. Most notably, the negative impact of mimicry in the context of colonization is far greater as it can lead to the destruction of entire cultures. Parallels do exist, especially considering the explicit hierarchical power structure of the military institution where the concepts of mimicry and menace can be seen to operate in the efforts of female military personnel to embody the soldier ideal seemingly modeled by their male colleagues.

continue to appear to successfully embody the ideal while simultaneously excluding members of the minority group from doing the same (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 86).

Bhabha describes those subjects who engage in mimicry as “almost but not quite” what they strive to embody – an identity that does not really exist (“Of Mimicry” 86, 91). Only the *idea* of an original exists, an adherence to which is prized, but illusory.

I delve into an explanation of the oedipal structure³ here because Lacan’s understanding of the manner in which subjects become aware of their bodies and the world around them provides a useful metaphor through which to understand how mimicry operates within the symbolic order. The oedipal structure starts when a child recognizes his/her separation from the primary caregiver and begins a lifelong quest to reacquire the fusion with the caregiver that s/he loses through the recognition of his/her own body (Ragland-Sullivan 8). Kaja Silverman, explicating Lacan’s theory, writes that the child first identifies himself or herself as separate from the primary caregiver by perceiving his/her reflection and recognizing the reflection as his/her own image, then identifying his/her image as separate from that of the primary caregiver (158). The child’s association of his/her self with the image, however, is a “misrecognition” – the image appears as a coherent whole at a time when the infant still lacks coordination and control over its body (Silverman 158). Thus, the child’s first conscious identification with his/her self as other than those around it is experienced as alienation and a further removal from the “real.”⁴ The child experiences frustration at his/her inability to control

³ Like Ragland-Sullivan, I use the word “structure” in place of Freud’s “complex” to avoid the prescriptive connotations of Freud’s and Lacan’s ideas. “Structure” acknowledges the agency of the subject to move within, and, potentially, past the expectations created by the symbolic and imaginary orders and language.

⁴ Lacan defines the “real” as the state of wholeness in which a foetus exists prior to the moment of sexual differentiation in the womb (Silverman 152). Subjects are formed through alienation from this “real” state, as they move further and further away from their original state of wholeness (Silverman 152, 153). A human being is no longer “whole” as soon as a sex can be assigned to a foetus. Misrecognition is another

his/her body as coherently as the image appears to (Silverman 158). The image then becomes the child's first ideal – part of the imaginary order⁵ – that the child strives to embody, unsuccessfully, through mimicry.

Following the child's recognition of his/her separation from the primary caregiver, the intervention of a third party – an “other” that Lacan calls the “paternal metaphor” or “phallic signifier” – solidifies both the child's recognition of his/her separateness, and his/her awareness of the limits of his/her newly-discovered body (Ragland-Sullivan 8). This marks the child's first identification of the imaginary order, and the moment in which infants first become aware of their limitations, that is, of the boundary between themselves and the larger world. This event marks the first awareness of one's own body.

The Lacanian imaginary and symbolic orders into which the child emerges during the oedipal phase affect the human being from the moment s/he begins to exist as a foetus until death. The imaginary order will continue to present the subject with socially constructed ideals that s/he will mimic within the symbolic order. For Lacan, meaning can only be made from within a closed system that the subject enters at the moment of sexual differentiation in the womb – the moment at which cultural forces that a foetus has yet to physically encounter can impose a sex on it (Silverman 152). When the foetus is neither male nor female, Lacan's human being exists in a “real” state of wholeness for the first and only time in its life (Silverman 152). From the moment of sexual

moment in which individuals move away from the wholeness they initially lost in the womb (Silverman 158), and continued misrecognitions throughout a subject's life continue to alienate him or her from the “real”.

⁵ The imaginary order consists of those events, such as sexual differentiation or entry into the symbolic order during the oedipal structure, that continue to separate the subject from the “real” as it grows (Silverman 157). It contains idealized imaginary images of what the subject should strive toward and embody. The imaginary order and the symbolic order co-exist, and the interactions between them play a role in regulating human interactions (Silverman 157).

differentiation on, the human subject strives toward the ideals s/he identifies in a constant effort to regain the wholeness s/he experienced in this “real” state (Silverman 152, 153).

Mita (*after a few moments of uncomfortable silence*): Why are you here, Abby?

Abby: Why am I here? Um, it’s like I said before. I want to hear about your experiences...

Mita: That’s not what I mean. I mean, what’s in it for you?

Sophia: Yeah. You’re not in the Navy like us.

Abby: I guess it does seem a little strange. Um. Well, I’ve always kinda been interested in the military as a way of finding out about yourself. Seeing how far you can push yourself. But I’ve always been scared of it too.

Grace: I get that. Especially with all the crazy movies out there.

Abby: Yeah. But then I met this woman in yoga and she told me she was in the military. And she was at *yoga*. She was, like, the opposite of what I expected. She was at yoga. And she took her kids to school, had nights out with her friends. And she was in the Army. It was kinda hard to get my head around. Anyway, I started to do some research and I felt like there wasn’t enough, like there should be more out there. And I felt like I – and everyone else – needed a, sort of, more realistic picture of what it’s like to be you.
Yeah.

Trapped within the symbolic order and striving to embody the image of an ideal soldier, women in the military are confronted with socially constructed hurdles that place them precariously at the tip of a double-edged sword. In part, this is due to the interplay of several competing ideals which women in the military are predisposed to mimic. Often, women in the military are not taken seriously simply because of their gender. Faced with the stress of asserting their authority in a male-dominated environment, many women adopt masculine characteristics, but, writes Angela R. Febbraro, “when women do act in masculine ways (e.g. autocratically), their performance ratings may suffer, especially if they are being rated by men in a male-

dominated environment” (95). Febbraro observes the struggle between male and female ideals embodied by women in the military. In conflict with reified ideals of “woman” as caring, nurturing, and soft-spoken, evaluators unconsciously interpret both feminine and masculine behaviour from military women negatively (Febbraro 95).⁶

Consequently, the efforts of female members of the military to mimic the masculine attributes of the soldier ideal contribute to negative perceptions about the suitability of women to military employment.

According to Lacan, the subjectivity that is established during the child’s entry into the oedipal structure cannot be maintained without the support of language (Silverman 181). Language operates within the symbolic order to refer to the ideals that are stored in the imaginary order – the word “soldier” evokes all those idealized aspects of the soldier that I discuss in Act 2.

In his description of how language operates within the symbolic order, Lacan discards Saussure’s simple formula, which describes language as functioning through the direct association of a word (“signifier,” e.g. tree) and a single object (“signified,” e.g. a tree itself) (115). Lacan asserts that words do not have a fixed object or idea to which they refer (115). In Lacan’s formulation, a soldier might be signified by the combination of a uniform, a rifle, a helmet and, as I have demonstrated, what is traditionally considered to be a “male” body.

Lacan stresses that meaning in language is created through metaphor – through the association of signifiers with other signifiers and not through the association of signifiers with signifieds (120). A subject’s outward signification creates a chain or

⁶ See also Lisa A. Boyce and Ann M. Herd “The Relationship Between Gender Role Stereotypes and Requisite Military Leadership” for similar results in a study of the US Air Force Academy.

“necklace” of meaning by alluding to other signifiers that combine to indicate a subject’s place within the symbolic order (Lacan 120). Bhabha agrees with Lacan’s formula. In an interview by Jonathon Rutherford, Bhabha’s description of how language makes meaning echoes what Lacan envisions. He states that:

[m]eaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified. So it follows that no culture is full unto itself, no culture is plainly plentitudinous...because its own symbol-forming activity, its own interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification and meaning-making, always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity. (Rutherford 210)

What both Lacan and Bhabha reveal in their descriptions of the interplay between signifiers is that the ideal identities referred to in language and stored in a group’s imaginary order, such as the image of the soldier, are ideals that cannot be reached because they do not exist in the first place. Instead, subjects make *identifications* with aspects of an ideal subjectivity (Rutherford 211). All subjects then attempt to outwardly embody the ideal using behavioural strategies that Bhabha dubs “mimicry” – some simply appear more successful than others.

What is important to note here is that, as a consequence of the impossibility of actually embodying an ideal, both men and women in the military are doing the same thing: continuously attempting to outwardly signify as the ideal soldier, an unachievable goal. The problem for women is the almost concrete association between soldiers and maleness, something individuals who identify as women cannot embody. This allows men to tenuously reassert their naturalized right to occupy the role of soldier over women.

Abby: Ok. Um, so listen. I wanted to go back to those tableaux we were working on last time. We saw one group but not the other...Grace, it was your group that went, right? So that means that we still need to hear from Meave, Jen, and Marie-Josée.

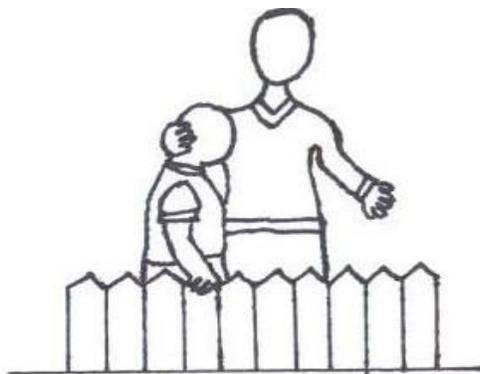
Marie-Josée: Jo.

Abby: Right, sorry. Meave, Jen, and Jo. We were thinking about challenges you've faced during your careers.

Meave, Jen, and Marie-Josée head to centre stage to show their tableaux to the group. Each tableau should be formed, held for a moment, then flow into the next. Marie-Josée's will be first and Meave's last. In the first image, Marie-Josée is the one standing at ease in the middle. Jen is walking away from her family in the second and Meave is the one trying to do a push-up in the third. The child in Jen's should be one of the other two on their knees. Grace snaps a picture of each tableau.

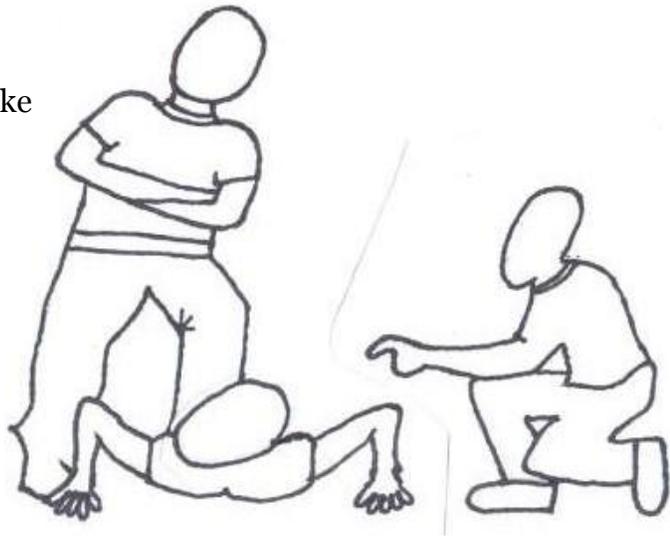


Marie-Josée's tableau conveys her feeling that her gender results in almost constant scrutiny at work.



Jen's tableau illustrates the difficulty of leaving her family for deployments.

Meave's tableau demonstrates her difficulty with PT and a sense that, instead of helping her, some people make it more difficult.



*The tableaux end and the presenters regroup. **Grace** heads over to **Abby** to show her the pictures.*

Successful female bodies in uniform present a challenge to the well-established soldier profile, resulting in resistance to the presence of women in military roles. I have described the military as a “male-dominated” institution a number of times and I now clarify the term. By “male-dominated” I do not simply mean that there are more men than women in the military, but that men have defined both their own positions within the institution, and those of the women who enter it, based on socially constructed ideas about the capabilities of each sex. The presence of women in the military sparks an unconscious reinforcement of the warrior ideal as men struggle to understand their identities and the military institution continues to evolve.⁷

According to both Lacan and Bhabha’s understandings of how language operates, the specific combination of signifiers that link together to signify a subject position will

⁷ Based on my experience, I do not interpret male military personnel’s use of the presence of women to reinforce their own positions as evidence of the power over the minority that Bhabha describes the “host” culture wielding. Rather, the urgency with which many men attempt to embody the soldier ideal often betrays an anxious desire to live up to the image of hyper-masculinity that the military champions, coupled with doubt about their ability to do so.

differ for every individual who interprets it (Silverman 163). With symbolic positions such as that of the soldier, however, the association between masculinity and the soldier ideal, refined over centuries, is difficult to unseat.

In Ridley Scott's 1997 film *G.I. Jane*, Demi Moore portrays Jordan O'Neil, a female navy lieutenant selected to be the first woman to undergo U.S. Navy SEAL training. The film follows Jordan through the training as she attempts to perform a job previously only performed by men. In the film, Jordan's attempt to become a soldier manifests itself through the transformation of her body so that it signifies "maleness."⁸ The cost, for "woman," of becoming a soldier is a great physical sacrifice – she must bring her body, which is perceived as physically inferior to those of her co-workers, "up"⁹ to the level of "man." During this process, Jordan spends extra time working out – her shoulders broaden, and her body is marked by bruises, cuts, and scrapes. In the ultimate symbolic act, she shaves off her long hair.

The scene in which Jordan shaves her head takes place at the base barber shop. In the scene, Jordan arrives at the shop to find it empty. Due to the barber's absence, Jordan shaves her own head, shedding outward feminine signifiers in favour of masculine ones. What Jordan embodies in this scene is the conflict that exists between

⁸ Following Butler, I consider "male," "female," "woman," and "man," limiting concepts that are placed in binary opposition to one another in an attempt to regulate human sexuality (Butler 42). Although "male" and "female" gender identities are normalized, myriad alternative gender identities have evolved in between them. Quotation marks around these words and others like them indicate that I am referring to them as discursively produced categories of gender.

⁹ I use quotation marks here to reflect a prevalent attitude within the military that the presence of women has resulted in decreasing standards for military service and a general dilution of the effectiveness of the force. In a series of interviews with men in the American military, Carol Cohn observed that many of her interviewees' discourse around gender-normed fitness standards has a focus that "is an angry, almost punitive, 'You want to do this? You want what's mine? Okay, but if you want to try and get it, you must play exactly by my rules and do everything a man would. And if you aren't prepared to do that...then you shouldn't be on my turf at all'" (146). The standards that existed prior to the presence of women have been naturalized; the fact that these standards were themselves created was overlooked by the interviewees (Cohn 141). Standards discourse like this is just one example of the institutionally acceptable ways in which men, often unconsciously, express their anger at the presence of women in the military.

the imaginary order and the symbolic order, and the ineffectiveness of attempts to mimic dominant ideals. As she shaves her head, Jordan appears to move closer to the ideal subject position she aims to occupy, but her success at SEAL training ultimately becomes a threat to her colleagues' positions within the dominant order.

As she progresses through SEAL training, Jordan's body begins to present a challenge to the symbolic order, which, according to Lacan's model, predisposes subjects to expect traditionally female bodies to signify as such (Silverman 181). Far from becoming a soldier, Jordan has become Bhabha's "menace." Unlike the "almost...but not quite" mimic, the menace embodies an "almost total but not quite" difference from dominant subjectivities (Bhabha, "Of Mimicry" 86, 91). When Jordan looks at herself in the mirror, she misrecognizes the body she sees as a coherent, fully controllable warrior – like the infant recognizing itself for the first time, the image Jordan sees of herself as a soldier is more coherent than her actual embodiment of the soldier ideal.

While Jordan perceives herself as a soldier, her success poses a threat to the established order, which contains carefully defined roles reserved for women and others reserved for men. The misrecognition in this case, however, is not only personal; it is also societal. Even before shaving her head, Jordan is succeeding as a member of the course. Notably, the problem is not only that Jordan is succeeding in her training; it is her outward signification – her visual embodiment of masculine attributes – in combination with her success that creates this "menace."

In its relation to the oedipal structure, gender functions within the symbolic order, in part, as an outward signification of who individuals are expected to feel sexual desire for. In response to the threat to the established order posed by Jordan's

successful outward signification as “soldier,” the Senator who selected her for SEAL training hires a photographer to take and release photographs of Jordan at a picnic with other women. The resulting photographs are published along with an article questioning Jordan’s sexuality. In the film’s reality, Jordan simply had a picnic with some female friends. However, Jordan’s outward signification as “soldier” or “male” also signifies that she *must* feel a sexual attraction toward women. Febbraro’s interviews revealed that questioning women’s sexual practices are a form of resistance to the presence of women in the military (114), and in my own experience, jokes implying that women in the military must either be promiscuous or attracted to other women abound.

Female soldiers embody the volatility of the sign; the instability of previously reified ideals of the “soldier” and the “warrior.” In *G.I. Jane* (Scott 1997), the dominant culture resists the challenge Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil levels against the soldier ideal by publicly accusing her of possessing “abnormal” sexual desires. The implication is that Jordan’s oedipal structure has not been properly experienced – while males sublimate their desire for unity with the primary caregiver as attraction to women, women sublimate their desire for the paternal metaphor into a heterosexual desire for men in general (Silverman 190-191).¹⁰ However, Jordan’s success also carries with it the potential for menacing bodies to challenge the dominant “host” culture, creating the space for change within society. Jordan’s difference from her male colleagues is

¹⁰ Opinions about how Lacan’s model accounts for alternative sexualities vary. Silverman considers his model prescriptive and limiting, describing both the construction of women “as lack” or “as plentitude” within the oedipal structure as a tool for heterosexual men to be reassured of their possession of the phallus either by “appropriation” (women are the phallus) or by “oppositional definition” (men as the phallus desired by women) (188). Ragland-Sullivan disagrees, considering the inability to fix meaning as liberating (6). I am inclined to agree with Silverman on this matter. Despite Ragland-Sullivan’s argument that sexuality “is learned through the dynamics of identification and language,” (6) the same desire for wholeness that drives members of the military to embody the soldier ideal creates ideal sexualities within the dominant order that are often linked to sexed bodies. Individuals who do not conform to these ideals, like members of the Queer community, often face pressure to conform.

menacing: “almost total but not quite” (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 91). Jordan does not occupy the same position as her male colleagues, nor has the subject position that she occupied before she began her training remained the same. The subject position Jordan occupies now did not exist before.

Despite the potential power to create new subject positions with a menacing identity, Jordan’s story illustrates the struggle faced by women who wish to be soldiers: they must simultaneously signify as men in order to be physically capable of accomplishing the job of the soldier while somehow conforming to an ideal of heterosexual “normalcy.” In this sense, Lacan’s description of the manner in which language and subject formation function to create and maintain the symbolic order is restrictive. Within the symbolic order, deviations from heterosexual “normalcy,” which include perceived deviations from the gender that a sexed body is expected to embody (Silverman 153, 190-191), are regarded with distrust and fear. Often, these ambiguous bodies – bodies that cannot be comfortably categorized and articulated in relation to an established norm – are disciplined until they become recognizable within the dominant order (Butler 52).

In *G.I. Jane* (Scott 1997), Jordan is punished for challenging recognizable identities within the established order and must re-establish herself as a recognizable heterosexual body so that she can continue with her training. Jordan is allowed to return to her training after uncovering the Senator’s actions against her and exposing the accusations as false. Her heterosexual “normalcy” restored, Jordan quietly returns to SEAL training as what I uncomfortably qualify as a “female soldier.” But she cannot simply be “soldier” – she is something else because she is also female. The necklace of signifiers surrounding the position of soldier leaves little room for a female subject.

Abby: Alright. Let's take five then we can open this up for discussion.

Marie-Josée: Pee break!

Marie-Josée dashes offstage into the 'hall'. Grace and Abby get distracted by the pictures and Jen strikes up a conversation with Mita away from the group. Grace and Abby wander into the hallway with the camera. The following argument should be muted at first, so as to avoid drawing attention.

Kate: Oh come ON!

Meave: What?

Kate: Are you kidding me with that?

Meave: I'm entitled to my opinion.

Kate: Not when it's ridiculous. You don't need anyone standing on your back, Meave! I remember you at basic. You couldn't do three push-ups if your life depended on it. 'Oh, push-ups are soooooo hard. Boys, could you carry this heavy, heavy rucksack for me?' If you ask me, we *should* have the same standards as the men. Things've only gotten more lax since they let us in.

Meave: What? As if the standards before we got here were handed down by God. Standards change because people change them, Kate.

Kate: People like you are what makes men hate us being here.

Charlie: B'ys? Let's just take a breath here.

Meave: And people like you are the reason Charlie could only buy a condom when she needed a tampon!

Kate: Well maybe Charlie shouldn't be here either!

Charlie: Hey!

Meave: Just because you've gotten all manly since we joined doesn't mean the rest of us should have to stop being women.

Kate (*walking toward Meave*): You joined my military. If you can't hack it, get out.

Charlie tries to come between them.

Sophia: Mita? Look. This is bad. This is what I was afraid of!

Mita: It's ok, Soph.

Jen: Seriously. Those two can never get along!

Jen goes to help Charlie and Mita follows.

Mita (to Sophia): Go get Jo!

Sophia exits in search of Marie-Josée.

Kate: Let's see who *should* be here. Right now! How many can you do, Meave, two?
Two and a half?

Meave: Leave me alone, Kate!

Jen: Look, maybe we're all a little tired...

Mita: Why don't we just leave them to it?

Kate (ignoring Jen and shoving Meave): Man up, Meave.

Meave: Push-ups have nothing to do with my job!

Kate (shoving Meave again): You know what? I'll do two for every thrust you can pass
off as a push-up. Just so it's fair

Kate takes a few paces back, setting up for a push-up contest.

Meave: That's it!

Charlie steps in to hold Meave back. Jen and Mita watch Kate.

Sophia (entering): I can't find Jo!

Mita: Get Abby!

Sophia (into the hallway): Uh, Abby? You'll probably want to see this...for your
research.

*Grace and Abby enter and notice the argument. Grace heads over to the group and
Abby approaches cautiously.*

Abby (unsure of what to do): Hey! What's going on over there, guys?

Meave: You don't like what I've got to say, Kate, why don't you quit whining and tell us
what it's like instead of skulking by the wall all day. Scared?

Grace (*frantically*): Enough! That's enough!!

Kate (*moving back toward Meave*): Who's scared? Maybe if you went to the gym once in a while you wouldn't be looking for an excuse right now.

Marie-Josée (*enters and immediately heads for Kate, stopping her advance*): Kate.
Stop.

Kate (*stares Marie-Josée down for a moment, then breaks eye contact*): This is all
bullshit anyway.

Kate turns and walks away from **Meave** and **Marie-Josée** goes with her. There is
silence for a few beats as everyone tries to figure out what went on.

Act 4

Stigma, Embodiment, and the Third Space

As a naturalized social construction, gender is a stigma that carries with it assumptions about an individual's ability to perform certain tasks. Bruce G. Link and Jo C. Phelan define stigma as socially determined and naturalized (367); linked to stereotypes once it has been established (369); a way to create difference and an "us" versus "them" mentality (370); and something that often results in status loss and discrimination against stigmatized individuals (371). Although women successfully complete the work required of them in the military on a daily basis, they remain stigmatized due to dominant social expectations about the roles that women ought to perform, and, consequently, experience difficulty identifying with the soldier ideal.

In an essay about their experiences in the Navy, Leading Seaman Geneviève Jobin and Private Lorraine van Rensburg express an awareness of the impact gender stigma might have on the respect they earn from their colleagues. They write that "[w]omen are considered equal in many ways; however, at the same time they are held to a particular standard that reflects beliefs and stereotypes about women and men...As a result, women on board ship have to be cautious about conducting themselves in stereotypically female ways" (145). Jobin and van Rensburg demonstrate an awareness of two of the idealized subject positions that battle for control over women's bodies: that of the masculine soldier and the broader range of subjectivities considered "female," which might include "mother" or "person in need of protection." Stigma is naturalized into the symbolic and imaginary orders, and, once a stigma is applied to a group of

bodies, the accuracy of the assumptions associated with these bodies is rarely questioned (Link & Phelan 373).

While for the Lacanian subject perceiving its reflection for the first time is a moment of simultaneous separation from the other and imagined coherence within a single body, Augusto Boal characterizes this recognition as the moment when subjectivity splits within the body itself. He writes, “[o]bserving itself, the human being perceives what it is, discovers what it is not, and imagines what it could become. It perceives where it is and where it is not, and imagines where it could go. A triad comes into being. The observing-I, the I-*in-situ*, and the not- I, that is, the other” (Boal, *Rainbow* 13, emphasis in original).¹ In addition to recognizing its self and the other, the Boalian subject becomes aware of his/her ability to observe both halves of the internal split.² Indeed, for Boal, the discovery of the self, the not-self, and the possible-self is not only the moment in which the subject comes into being; it is also the moment in which the human being discovers theatre (Feldhendler 94). Consequently, the moment in which the subject is formed is also the moment in which the subject understands how human beings interact within the symbolic order.

The significance of the moment in which subjects become aware of their bodies has implications for the manner in which they interact with one another and order their worlds throughout their lives. The power of performance becomes apparent in theatre’s

¹ Daniel Feldhendler also makes this connection in his essay “Augusto Boal and Jacob L. Moreno: Theatre and Therapy.”

² Problematically, Boal seems to consider the “observing-I” as an identity outside of ideology (Auslander 130). This is similar to the illusion that members of a dominant culture occupy subject positions that are somehow authentic in their relation to an original ideal (Bhabha, “Of Mimicry” 88). However, subjects are, to a certain degree, stuck within articulatable boundaries for which they rely on language and the symbolic order. Accordingly, it is important to recognize that the observing-I cannot exist outside of the influence of social norms and expectations.

ability to make subjects aware of the symbolic order in which they live – to show subjects who they are and who they might wish to be.

Whereas Lacan sees a subject's entry into the symbolic order as another loss in a series of losses that will carry on throughout his/her life, Boal understands the moment of self-perception as an opportunity to gain the power to both identify conditions that ought to change, and actually begin to implement this change. Daniel Feldhendler describes this well when he writes that

Boal defines theatre as the first discovery of humankind. Theatre emerges in the moment in which the human being recognizes that s/he can see himself or herself...s/he imagines who s/he could become. For Boal, the therapeutic effect lies within the dynamic of seeing and being seen, in the recognition of the self and the other, and in the subsequent expressions of desire for change in everyday life.

(94)

Boal considers the body to be the primary tool with which subjects respond to the authority of the invisible order that structures their lives. He believes that, in theatre, subjects can do exactly what they learn to do when they first recognize their own bodies. In other words, the self-perceiving subject can challenge his/her own position within society precisely because of his/her ability to see where s/he is, figure out where s/he wants to be, and identify where s/he does not want to go.

The primary ability of the "observing-I" is to compare itself to others and to ideal images within society as it develops alongside the other "Is." It is the subject's comparisons between his/her own body, the bodies of others, and the ideal body that allows the subject to become aware of his/her position within society. It is also this

ability to make comparisons that allows the subject to label and classify other bodies and, in some cases, privilege or stigmatize others.

Many women in the military find themselves constantly in-between a minimum of two identities (Bélanger 162-163). While they can perform the task they signed up to perform, they cannot inhabit the identity they signed up to be. Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger attributes women's fluid gender identifications in the military to what she considers a knowledge of "two-genders" – a desire to conform to an image of a supposedly genderless soldier or sailor that conflicts with one's overall identifications with female subjectivities (163). For me, this position between genders creates a sense of being outside of the self; of constant negotiation between who I am in the military and who I am outside the military. In my location outside of my self, I have had the disorienting experience of consciously embodying the "observing-I," recognizing those aspects of the military identity that I lack, and realizing that I cannot conform to them.

For women who experience this "stigma consciousness" (Link & Phelan 375), the stakes are high. Link and Phelan describe stigma consciousness as an individual's awareness of which stigmas might apply to them (375). In this awareness, "the stereotype becomes a threat or challenge either because one might be evaluated in accordance with the stereotype or because one might confirm the stereotype through one's behaviour" (Link & Phelan 375). The implications of this position for Canadian servicewomen are double-edged: studies show that, to date, women continue to be evaluated against a male standard when it comes to physical fitness and leadership qualities,³ but the women who come closest to the male standard of leadership style are

³ For a thorough investigation of men's discourse surrounding fitness standards in the American military, see the essay by Carol Cohn. For several essays about the leadership challenges facing women in the Canadian Navy, see Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger and Karen D. Davis, 2010.

perceived as poor leaders because of an unconscious expectation that women approach subordinates in a more traditionally “feminine” (e.g. soft-spoken) manner (Boyce & Herd 372; Febbraro 95 - 96). Women cannot simply lead in a “feminine” manner, however, since a soft-spoken demeanour, perceived as ineffective in a military environment, negatively affects the performance ratings of female leaders (Febbraro 94).

The Canadian Forces has stated its desire to remove any barriers to women’s success that exist within its organization, and to create an environment where both men and women have an equal opportunity to succeed in the same job in the process (Bélanger 160). To this end, all members of the CF are taught to consider themselves as a “soldier/sailor first,” depending on their element (the soldier for army and air force personnel, and the sailor for naval personnel). Members are expected to consider this soldier/sailor as genderless; however, in her interviews with women in the navy, Bélanger discovered that, although her interviewees initially described themselves as genderless soldiers or sailors “first,” their subsequent expression emphasized either their identity as “female CF member, females playing the role of a masculine CF member or, simply, a genderless CF member” (165). Significantly, the women Bélanger interviewed described the pressure they felt to conceal their feminine attributes while they were at work, indicating that the soldier ideal with which they identify is not feminine and that they do not identify with this image as women (Bélanger 165).

I have always felt some discomfort about the binary between male and female that is maintained in research about gender integration, as subjects rarely identify exclusively with one end of the binary or the other. Nevertheless, it may be impossible at this moment within the gendered organization of the military to remove gender from

the equation. Indeed, Bélanger cites the gendered history of the word “soldier” as one factor that makes it difficult for female members to comfortably identify with being soldiers first (157) and consistently refers to the soldier image as a “supposedly non-gendered” soldier/sailor; one who might potentially be hailed, in title, as a man.⁴ Considering the fact that members of the military self-identify as “women” or “men,” the binary opposition perpetuated by the use of pronouns like “s/he,” and gender categories such as “women,” “man,” “male,” and “female” are words that remain necessary to describe the subject positions individuals in the military occupy today. It is only through this binary that it can become clear how, within the “deeply gendered, masculine organization” of the CF (Taber 291), all members continue to find it difficult to separate the word “soldier” from its historically idealized male body.

Abby: Ok. That got a little intense. Well, um, let’s just take a few minutes to focus and talk this out. Everyone pick a partner and let’s do the mirroring exercise I showed you earlier. Kate, I’d really like it if you’d participate in this one.

Marie-Josée: She will.

Kate and Marie-Josée exchange a few words and Kate agrees to participate. Kate faces Marie-Josée at centre stage while the others do the same scattered around the stage. The pairs are frozen in a mirror image.

Abby: Ok. Now, when you’re ready, I want you to start moving in unison – (**Kate starts to move but too quickly**) slowly.

Slowly the pairs begin to move in unison, each member of the pair maintaining a mirrored image of the other. Kate and Marie-Josée aren’t very good at it and they don’t improve. Abby walks over to Grace and they speak quietly.

Abby: Grace, is this normal? This sort of conflict? I thought the barriers you face would function to make women stand together.

Grace: Why? This isn’t just a men versus women thing.

⁴ I am referring here to ranks held by non-commissioned members in the Navy: Ordinary Seaman, Able Seaman, Leading Seaman, and Master Seaman.

Abby nods, thinking, then begins to walk among the pairs as they speak their lines from their positions around the stage.

Abby: So keep focusing on the movements and let's talk a bit about Meave's tableau.
What was it about?

Sophia: I think it was about PT.

Abby: Physical training, right? What about it?

Grace: Well it looked like the person on the ground wasn't able to do a push-up.

Charlie: An' no one was helpin' them with their troubles.

Abby: Ok. Do any of you relate to that? Is there a lot of difficulty with PT?

Sophia (*quietly*): Um, well, it's like most things – we do have to work harder at it.

Mita: But we get 'er done!

Kate (*still having trouble with the mirror exercise*): I'm not getting this stupid exercise.

Jen: And it gets you respect too. If people see you at the gym all the time.

Meave: But it *does* test for things men are better at.

Grace: I'd rock that test if they asked me to stretch into the shape of a pretzel!

Abby: So it sounds like maybe there's a conflict between women's bodies and this test?

Meave: You could put it that way, I guess.

Kate (*mutters*): There's more to it.

Marie-Josée (*to Kate*): Say that!

Abby: What's that Jo?

Marie-Josée *waits a moment to see if Kate will answer.*

Marie-Josée: Kate said there's more to it.

There's a pause as everyone thinks about it.

Kate (*focusing on the exercise and not realizing that she's participating*): It feels like there's two of me.

Surprised, Meave stops the mirroring exercise then takes it up again when she realizes.

Meave: Yeah.

Marie-Josée: Right. There's woman me.

Kate: And soldier me.

Abby (*cautiously*): Maybe you could show me what you mean, Kate?

The implication that male is the norm against which women are evaluated is one that can still be found in everyday conditions in the CF. In Act 2, I mentioned entering a female bathroom only to find a row of urinals along the wall beside me. Bathrooms like this are common in military buildings that were constructed prior to the integration of women into the military and which have not yet undergone renovations. As the number of women in the military grew, wings of already-existing barracks were set aside for women to live in without altering the facilities. It was this lack of accommodation, as I mentioned before, that led to Nancy Taber and her female colleagues changing in the exercise room on a course (295), and to Major Anne Reiffenstein having to “hunt down a women’s washroom” in an army unit that did not have any female members (4). This use of space acts, unintentionally, as a reminder to women that our presence is recent and imposing. It contributes to a sense of temporariness, as if these facilities have been set aside for the moment until we leave. It is only recently, as buildings have started to undergo renovation, that female bathrooms have been constructed without urinals.

Another illustration of masculinity as the norm and femininity as the exception within the CF is evident in the manner in which personnel are referred to in some messages. Consider the following examples: “temporary duty” messages indicate the ranks, names, service numbers and other particulars of military personnel who will

proceed on training. On these messages the rank of female personnel is followed, in brackets, by a capital F: OS (F) Smith J. Similarly, on “attach posting” messages, which contain details of an individual’s upcoming posting, a capital W follows the rank of female personnel: OS (W) Smith J. For male personnel in both cases, there is no amplifying information – only the rank is listed: OS Smith J. The implication is clear: unless otherwise indicated, these messages assume personnel are male. The absence of amplifying information following the names of male personnel indicates that their gender is assumed. (F) or (W) indicates a deviation from the norm. These letters function not only to identify personnel as female; in contrast to the manner in which male personnel are listed, it indicates, decidedly, that they are not male.

Bélanger observed that, in interviews, female members of the military identify themselves with the soldier identity to begin with, but always describe their experiences as women after this initial identification (161). Women’s identifications with their femininity do not disappear when they join the military; rather, they are emphasized. Since this is the case, it is important to consider the problematic implications of an expression like “soldier/sailor first,” which not only excludes the feminine from the realm of signification; it excludes men from accessing the hybrid gender(s) Bélanger saw emerging in the reflections of her interviewees’ stories. Through its repetition, “soldier first” is a tacit demand on the part of the CF that all personnel identify first with a masculine identity. It implies that the CF was, is, and will continue to be a masculine organization. It asks women to set aside their femininity in favour of occupying a position within the hegemonic patriarchy of the military.

Initially, I perceived women’s difficulties aligning their identities with the CF’s “genderless” soldier as detrimental to their attempts to integrate into the military and,

to a certain extent, I still do. Through the course of my research, however, I started to believe that there is a certain amount of power that can be drawn from a position in-between soldier and “female” identities, especially when considered in relation to the self-reflexive function of Boal’s “observing-I.”

In a study exploring the leadership styles of female combat arms officers, Angela R. Febbraro observed the tendency for her interviewees to consider both “masculine (task-oriented) and feminine (person-oriented)” personal behaviour and characteristics in combination as the attributes a good leader should possess (99). Lisa A. Boyce and Ann M. Herd uncovered a similar pattern in their surveys of female U.S. Air Force Academy students (372). In several of the personal narratives I analyzed, the authors expressed the sentiment that they have something unique to offer the organization. An excerpt from Jaime Speiser-Blanchet’s narrative illustrates the potential for power that military women’s in-betweenness can grant them: “[m]y approach to problem solving comes naturally to me because I value the importance of listening to someone and validating their feelings, even before tackling the issue at hand. I noticed that some men would try to solve a perceived problem that actually diffused itself as soon as an individual had the chance to talk and be heard” (53). With her awareness of two different approaches that she can employ when helping a subordinate with a problem, Speiser-Blanchet has the freedom to choose either one, or combine aspects of both, depending on the situation.

Bélanger refers to women’s identifications with both the soldier and feminine identities as a knowledge of “two ‘genders’” (163). I wonder if military personnel might search for a way to open the two dominant genders Bélanger identifies to the creation of new hybrid genders that lie between and even outside of the male-female binary. Ideally,

these hybrid genders might be expressed by both traditionally masculine bodies and traditionally feminine bodies and could be considered the new ideals for military service. Here, space is cleared for feminine behaviours to become acceptable in the military, but there is also still space for masculine identifications with images like that of the soldier to evolve.

Homi Bhabha locates nascent hybrid identities in what he calls the “Third Space,” which can be described as the space between signifiers as they slide against each other to signify a specific subject position. The power of the Third Space lies in its “ambivalence” – by referring to two (or more) subject positions at once, identifications with ideals recombine to create a new hybrid subject position (“Commitment” 36).

In the ambivalence of the sign, the Third Space described by Bhabha and the aesthetic space outlined by Boal can work together in a complementary manner in order to help individuals of all gender identifications experiment with hybrid identities that might work in the military. The hybrid identifications that arise between female and soldier identifications are not androgynous, since, as I discussed above, women continue to emphasize and identify with feminine attributes despite their partial identification with the soldier ideal. Presumably, men would react in a similar manner were they asked to identify with socially dominant “female” ideals.

***Kate** and **Marie-Josée** break eye contact. After a pause, **Kate** nods and they turn away from each other. The other pairs’ movements slow as they begin to watch, apprehensively at first, but then, in an effort to support **Kate**, they join in the scene.*

***Kate** tosses a bundle that contains a pair of heels and an apron to **Marie-Josée** then gets a bundle with a pair of combat boots and a uniform shirt for herself. They drop the bundles beside them, and carry on with the mirroring exercise. After a few moments, they freeze, and slowly pick up the bundles. In unison, they spin around to face the wings. **Kate** marches stage right while **Marie-Josée** moves stage left. Their actions vaguely mirror each other until they turn and face the audience in unison. They slam their shoes into the ground and drop their respective ‘uniforms’ beside them.*

*With determination, they begin to dress, putting their shoes on last and stomping each foot as they do. **Marie-Josée** freezes. **Kate** walks over to **Sophia** and arranges her at attention with her back to the audience at the edge of the stage in the centre. She places **Charlie** downstage left with her arms crossed watching **Marie-Josée**.*

Sophia: Uh, Kate? I'm probably not the right choice for this...since I don't think I'll do the play.

Mita: But you're here now, right Soph?

***Kate** looks at **Sophia** who nods, then returns to her original position.*

Sophia: Ok. *(She begins the scene.)* Platoon! *(**Kate**, who is standing with her arms at her sides, smartly snaps them behind her back so that she is standing at ease. **Marie-Josée** leans on one hip, not paying attention.)* Platoon atten'shun!

***Kate** comes smartly to attention. **Marie-Josée** applies some lip gloss from a tube she finds in the apron pocket. **Charlie** joins in, marching toward **Marie-Josée**.*

Charlie: Is there something you didn't understand in that order, soldier?!

Marie-Josée *(calmly)*: Sorry.

*She places the lip gloss back in the apron pocket and stands at attention. **Charlie** heads over to **Kate**.*

Charlie: Did you shave this morning, soldier?

Kate: Yes PO!

Charlie *(returning to **Marie-Josée**)*: Did you shave this morning, soldier?

Marie-Josée: Um, sure.

Charlie: I don't believe you!

Marie-Josée *shrugs*.

Sophia: Platoon! Two paces forward march!

***Kate** takes two paces downstage and **Marie-Josée** wanders forward.*

Sophia: Number!

Kate: One!

Marie-Josée: Two.

Sophia: Odd numbers right, even numbers left turn!

Kate and Marie-Josée turn.

Sophia (to Charlie): They're all yours PO! (To **Kate and Marie-Josée.**) Quick march!

Her part finished, Sophia quickly joins the watching group. Kate and Marie-Josée march toward the sides of the stage, then turn and march upstage, then toward each other heading for the centre of the stage. During this time, Charlie should yell at them for making mistakes or call out the cadence ('left right left right left right left') and yell 'wheel' when it is time for Kate and Marie-Josée to turn. Kate takes it very seriously and Marie-Josée follows the orders complacently. When they turn and march toward each other, Kate and Marie-Josée collide upstage centre and fall, losing a shoe each.

Kate (to Marie-Josée): This isn't working.

Marie-Josée tosses **Kate** the heel she lost and **Kate** tosses her boot to **Marie-Josée**. They put on their new shoes so that now **Kate** is wearing one combat boot and one heel and **Marie-Josée** is wearing the opposite combat boot and the opposite heel. They're about to finish when **Charlie** yells.

Charlie (as they scramble around on the ground): You call yourselves soldiers?! This is pathetic. Get back up. NOW!

They rush to get up and continue marching with difficulty.

Charlie: Left, right, left, right, left, right, left!

As she marches, Kate tries not to let the addition of the heel to her uniform affect her marching, but it inevitably does. Marie-Josée has more difficulty.

Marie-Josée (taking off her apron): This is ridiculous!

She kicks off the heel followed by the boot. Kate sees this and kicks off her combat boot first then takes the uniform shirt off and throws it aside. The heel is the last to go. The scene stops and everyone gathers around to discuss it.

Arguably, within a military context, effeminate men face greater stigma than masculinised women, especially after 22 years of women's integration into combat roles. As Speiser-Blanchet writes, "I noticed...that most men do not often wish to express their feelings, certainly not as women do" (Speiser-Blanchet 53). Nevertheless, hybrid

identities, which conceive of gender in new ways need to emerge and it has to become acceptable for men to interact with one another in “feminine” ways. Until this occurs, women in the military will continue struggle with how to reconcile conflicting messages, with how to survive in a male environment, and with proving they have a right to be there.

Bhabha explains that hybridity contains “...traces of those feelings and practices which inform it...so that hybridity puts together the traces of certain other meanings or discourses” (Rutherford 211). Like Lieutenant Jordan O’Neil’s position at the end of *G.I. Jane* (Scott 1997), identities that emerge from the Third Space did not exist before, but, as Jordan’s struggle also illustrates, the development of hybrid identities is not an easy process. In *G.I. Jane* (Scott 1997), Jordan’s new subject position was created through a painful, sometimes dangerous, attack on her previously existing identity. Far from a harmonious process, the emergence of new military identities from the Third Space will continue to be hard fought and difficult to achieve.

As I noted before, the advantage to Boal’s aesthetic space is that real-life identities – what they are, what they want to be, and how they might interact – can be explored without real-life consequences. In contrast, as Jordan O’Neil’s struggle demonstrates, the consequences for identities that emerge out of the Third Space are very real. Though painful and difficult to establish, hybrid identities move in spaces that do not readily reveal themselves to dominant members of a culture, and there is certainly the potential for these identities, like those expressed by the Queer community, to use this to challenge dominant cultural norms.

In the context of the ongoing struggles women face in the military, identifiable issues exist and can be faced head-on by military personnel in image theatre workshops.

Bélanger has already identified the manner in which hybrid military identities are emerging in military women. It is because of this knowledge that embodied research about gender in the military can move into the aesthetic space where men, women, and unnamed hybrid gender identities, can share their fears and explore how they might overcome them in a manner that rises above the challenge of identifying with the soldier ideal.

Curtain Call Conclusion

Abby: So you can't just be one or the other?

Kate: But combining them doesn't work either.

Abby: Why not?

Sophia: You're almost always seen as a woman first.

Abby: So you've got these ideals you're supposed to become, but you can't? So what would work then?

Kate: What do you mean 'what would work'? It already works.

Abby: Do you identify with the image of the soldier?

***Kate and Meave** answer at the same time.*

Kate: Obviously. Why else would we be here?

Meave: Sometimes, I guess.

***Kate** scoffs and there's a pause.*

Marie-Josée: When I'm in training or something, sometimes it feels like I'm a different person then when I'm at home.

Kate: What?

Mita: Yeah. Like you can be outside yourself and seeing where you don't live up to the image.

Kate (*realizing she's not alone*): Yeah.

Abby: So is there a way to feel more at home in your job?

Kate: I dunno.

Everyone shrugs.

Abby: Any thoughts at all?

Sophia: What if we didn't have to be soldiers first?

Grace: So women first instead?

Kate: But we're not really either first. Or both at the same time.

Charlie: We need a new word!

Grace: Like what?

Marie-Josée: Soldames?

Mita: Womdier?

Sophia: Amazons! No. Mamazons!

There's silence for a moment as everyone runs out of ideas.

Abby: Don't you think you might need more than a new word?

I had to stop writing *Not Quite Soldiers* with Abby's question because I realized that, in order to explore the future of gender relations in the military, the workshop requires both men and women. I have always considered the military as a smaller sample of the larger society which it serves; a sample where the tensions and harmonies in society are condensed as they interact with the traditional rules and regulations of the military. The exclusion of women from appearing to embody ideals within society is certainly applicable to institutions other than the military, and analyses of how ideals function in institutions like the government or professional sports to exclude women would certainly be productive. The Canadian Forces is unique, though, in how explicit it is about what its ideal body looks like and in the insistence of the "soldier first" mantra.

As an institution that has not yet questioned the traditional markers of masculinity and femininity, the military continues to face significant challenges to the social integration of women into its masculine structure. The military explicitly defines social norms that are vaguer – more like undercurrents – outside of its institutional

reach. It is this explicit definition that makes the military a logical platform on which to think about how to explore the impact of gendered ideals in other contexts. Within the military, the fissures this definition produce, the playing field on which military men and women can test their assumptions about gender differences that this provides, creates an ideal environment in which to question the limitations of our expectations and ideals. But all genders, traditional and emerging, will need to involve themselves in the process.

One of the stories that struck me the most at the “Staking our Claim” conference was told by the Lieutenant-Commander (LCdr) Susan Long-Poucher, Commanding Officer of the naval reserve unit HMCS Cataraqui. Long-Poucher recalled a fleet-wide event hosted in Halifax early in her career. A formal event, sailors were directed to wear their dress white uniform – a white short sleeved shirt with white pants and white shoes – to the festivities. Female sailors, whose formal uniforms included skirts at the time, were not issued white skirts as the military did not manufacture them. With white skirts unavailable to them, the women were expected to purchase formal ball gowns instead. Unwilling to attend the event out of uniform, Long-Poucher and her peers, who felt that their formal dresses would not only set them apart from their male colleagues but would also fail to mark them as members of the military at all, made their own white-skirted uniforms and premiered them at the event. Just one example of many in which women participated in playful performative acts of camouflage designed to put them on a level footing with their male colleagues, this story exemplifies some of the small steps that have been taken toward gender integration.

Similarly, Rose Tanchyk recalls moments when younger women, new to the naval environment, would turn to her for advice:

I cannot tell you how many times I had a girl cry on my shoulders because the men were picking on her. I let the junior women vent to me about how the guys were treating them...Basically, my message to women was to show the men that you belonged there and not to let them scare you off the ship. That meant that they could not let the men's comments break them down and they certainly could not give them the satisfaction of seeing a woman cry. (49)

Tanchyk describes a process where she advises women who experience difficulty reconciling their feminine identities with their roles in the military to conceal their femininity from their male colleagues with small performances that challenge male sailors' expectations for how women should behave. In this manner, women learn to adapt and survive in a masculine world, but whether or not they flourish is another matter.

Captain Thomas St. Denis writes that "ambiguous and conflicting notions of masculinity" have led to the popularity of the ideal warrior image toward which men strive (36). Taking their primary role models from Hollywood movies, young men aspire to the lone warrior ideal portrayed by actors like Keifer Sutherland, Chris Pine, and Will Smith (St. Denis 36).¹ Arguably, *G.I. Jane* is subversive in that it uses the male Hollywood soldier image that is so attractive today and shows a woman successfully taking on the attributes of a warrior. But Lieutenant Jordan O'Neil's evolution throughout the film does not offer a cure-all solution for the hurdles women face in the military. In fact, as Bélanger discovered, many women express difficulty with identifying with the soldier ideal. Ultimately, most women simply cannot approach their military

¹ St. Denis lists Sylvester Stallone, Steven Segal, and Chuck Norris. Since St. Denis's article was published 10 years ago in 2001, I have chosen to update the list with more recent (and, I'm sure, soon to be replaced) actors who fit the bill.

careers in the same manner as Jordan, needing instead to create their own hybrid versions of military identities.

Today, the military should strive toward a new type of environment that opens itself to varied subjectivities. Women should no longer find themselves camouflaging their bodies or telling each other stories about how to adapt and survive in a masculine institution.

“[O]ur intimations of exceeding the barrier or boundary – the very act of going *beyond* – are unknowable, unrepresentable, without a return to the ‘present’ which, in the process of repetition, becomes disjunct and displaced,” writes Homi Bhabha (“Introduction” 4). This is what I offer here: a play that approaches the interstices in which women in the military presently find themselves. But I find that this offering is not enough. The time for women acting alone together to push for change in the military has passed. It is time now for men and women to meet in the Third Space, for men to be exposed to women’s experiences in this space, and for all genders to write the final scene.

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Appendix A Workshop Design

1. Knowing the Body – 35 min total

This section functions as a warm-up period, an acclimatization period where participants learn to use their bodies to communicate and a period where participants begin to trust each other through mutual participation in and support throughout the exercises.

Item	Time Allotted	Description
General warm-up	10 min	Participants interact with one another in a whole-group capacity, becoming accustomed to the space and to working with their bodies. Games that might be used include “zip zap zop,” a high energy game where participants interact with one another through motion and sound or “for who the wind blows,” where participants quickly switch seats with others sharing a characteristic identified by a participant in the middle of the circle of chairs.
“The cross and the circle” (Boal, <i>Games 62</i>)	5 min	Participants make a circle in the air with their right hands, then stop. They draw a cross in the air with their left hands, then stop. Finally, they attempt to make the two motions simultaneously. Boal recommends warning participants that this task is almost impossible to accomplish, noting that this knowledge allow participants to become more comfortable with trying the exercise and failing (<i>Games 62</i>). This exercise makes participants aware of the patterns in which their bodies have been conditioned to move.

Following the warm-up, participants will work in pairs, growing more comfortable with the physical contact that will be required of them when they sculpt images later on. The goal of these games is not to outdo one’s partner, but to work together to maintain a balance between both of their actions. As Boal notes, this

introduces the relationship of cooperation that should be maintained throughout the process of Image Theatre (*Games 65*).

Item	Time Allotted	Description
“Columbian hypnosis” (Boal, <i>Games 63</i>)	10 min	Partner 1 holds his/her hand out in front of them while partner 2 places his/her face a few centimetres away from the hand. Partner 1 then begins to move their hand which partner 2 follows with their face, attempting to maintain a constant distance away from it.
Tandem sit	5 min	Both partners face one another and grasp each other by the wrists. They must then slowly sit down on the ground and stand back up without speaking or letting go of each other’s wrists.
“Pushing against each other” (Boal, <i>Games 65-66</i>)	5 min	Partners make a peak joining their hands above their heads palm to palm, then lean forward until they are supporting one another’s weight. The aim is to maintain their balance above an imaginary line that divides them without crossing the line.

2. Making the Body Expressive – 25 min total

Now that participants are more comfortable using their bodies, Boal recommends using some games that begin to ask participants to express themselves through the body instead of relying on language (Boal, *Theater 126*).

Item	Time Allotted	Description
“Slow motion race” (Boal, <i>Theater 128</i>)	10 min	Participants take part in a race where the object is to finish last. Movements should be made in slow motion and cannot stop once they have begun. At every step, the foot must be raised above the knee.
Finding your partner	15 min	Trades specific to the Navy will be written on slips of paper that each participant will draw out of a hat. Participants must then silently mime the actions associated with individuals in that trade. Each trade will have two people performing actions they believe will illustrate the function of this trade to others. After a few minutes, participants will move about the room trying to identify their fellow tradesperson and, once they have found them, silently convince that person to leave the game-play area with them.

3. The theater as language – 2 hours

At this stage, participants are ready to begin working with Image Theatre techniques to explore themes or questions that will be provided to them. The technique I will employ is called “The image of the images” (Boal, *Rainbow* 77-80) which functions to combine several different images created by the participants into one image that attempts to encompass those aspects of the smaller images that participants deem most important.

Participants will work in groups of two one more time to conduct a preparatory exercise which will introduce them to the techniques they can employ when they “sculpt” their fellow participants into three-dimensional tableau-images later on. Without speaking, partners will be instructed to “sculpt” each other into an active pose (anything that comes to mind) in one of three ways: by assuming the pose themselves and having their partners imitate them, by “pulling” their partners body parts into position as if they had puppet strings attached to them, or by physically moving their partner into position (Boal, *Games* 127; 128; 130).

Following the work in pairs, participants will be divided into groups of 4 or 5 and given a theme or question to explore. Each member of the group will be instructed to sculpt an image that reflects their relationship to, or feelings about the issue under exploration, inserting themselves into the image once the other members of their group have been posed. Often in image theatre, sculptors remain outside an image, however, by inserting themselves into the image, sculptors can maintain a certain degree of anonymity in relation to the story their image tells; it will not be clear to everyone in the room who the sculptor is. Once each member of a group has created an image, they will return to the larger group and present the images each member sculpted in a sequence.

A picture will be taken of each image. Group 1 will show their images in sequence once and those watching (Group 2) will be invited to make observations about the images. Groups 1 and 2 will then switch places and repeat the process of viewing the images in sequence. Once the images from both groups have been discussed, a central image will be identified for use in the creation of “the image of the images” (Boal, *Rainbow* 78). In the image of the images, the entire group creates a single tableau-image that unites their observations about the smaller images, still without speaking. The person who is embodying the central image will take up their pose, and the other participants will take up a position in relation to this image, adding themselves to the larger picture. This final image, which synthesizes those aspects of the smaller images that participants identify as important, will also be photographed.

The final act of the day serves to ensure that anything that was overlooked or requires more emphasis can be addressed. Taking a leaf out of Joe Norris’ “Playbuilding” method, I will show participants the pictures that were taken that day and ask them to record themes that were important to them or oversights they think were made on cue cards. This functions to complement the action undertaken by participants in the Image Theatre exercises by providing them with a further opportunity to be the authors of the stories they have told throughout the day (Norris 23). Additionally, it diversifies the number of perspectives of the images themselves that I can draw from while writing the script, making my research as democratic as I can within the scope of this project.