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"Oh! It's All One Big Happy Time": Examining the Emotional Experiences of Canadian Servicewomen during the Second World War

Department of History

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**“OH! IT’S ALL ONE BIG HAPPY TIME”: EXAMINING THE EMOTIONAL
EXPERIENCES OF CANADIAN SERVICEWOMEN DURING THE
SECOND WORLD WAR**

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SECOND WORLD WAR

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Abstract

This thesis explores the emotional experiences of Canadian servicewomen during the Second World War and their reactions to service life. Almost two years after entering the war, the Canadian government concluded that enlisting women in the military freed up more men to fight while allowing the services to maintain regular operations. As women moved into these traditionally male roles, the government and military tried to direct them in how they should act and feel while in service. This was demonstrated in propaganda and popular media, such as newspapers, that depicted the lives of servicewomen. In response, this thesis considers how servicewomen fit or broke with these emotional standards set out for them, all while in the context of trying to maintain morale.

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Introduction

“On Wednesday, the 18 of November, civilian Lamb offered herself unwillingly and willingly, willy nilly, to the C.W.A.C...I’ve never known so much misery.”¹

These words of Molly Lamb Bobak, considered by the Canadian government as Canada’s first female war artist, capture the mixed emotions of women who entered one of the Canadian armed forces that opened to them during the Second World War. On the tenth of September 1939, Canada officially entered the War and many new opportunities opened up for women across Canada. Women found themselves entering previously male-dominated work spaces as the need for men to serve overseas grew. Initially, the work that was offered to women was similar to that in the First World War, such as jobs in production factories or the traditional female role of nursing. It soon became apparent, however, that allowing women in the military to cover positions that were similar to those they were already doing outside the services, such as secretarial work, would also release many more able-bodied men to fight overseas. To this end, it is estimated that around 50 000, mostly young, women joined one of Canada’s armed forces during the Second World War.² Many of those women, like Molly Lamb Bobak, felt mixed emotions about their time in service, captured in their personal diaries and letters.

Historians have focused on examining the changing roles of women and the meaning and maintenance of femininity in Canada’s wartime society, but they have largely neglected how women viewed and recorded their own experiences. For example, research on propaganda and marketing aimed at women during this time period

¹ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Girl Takes Drastic Step,” November 22, 1942, *W110278: The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M., 1942–45*, R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

² “Canada Remembers Women at War,” *Veterans Affairs Canada*, <https://www.veterans.gc.ca/pdf/cr/pi-sheets/women.pdf>, 2.

demonstrates some of the struggles the government and wider Canadian society faced in allowing women into male-centered spaces while attempting to maintain previous standards of femininity. What this research does not consider is whether or not women chose to conform to these standards.³ It also does not consider how women were responding to the war or their place within it, including how servicewomen reacted to entering a previously male dominated sphere. This study specifically seeks to examine the emotional expressions of servicewomen because they found themselves moving into military roles that had never been opened up to women, unlike some areas of the civilian workforce. Studying their diaries and letters provides a means to understand if their experiences fit with emotional narratives presented in propaganda and media coverage that demonstrated how servicewomen should be acting. The government used and influenced these types of sources in order to try and have people behave in certain ways, especially ways that helped strengthen morale. Because of this type of content, these sources provide good insight into how the government expected servicewomen to behave as they entered the military. Additionally, this thesis will show that servicewomen were aware of what was emotionally required of them, and they actively worked to maintain these emotional standards, believing that keeping up the morale of themselves and those around them was of utmost importance for the success of the war effort. By examining servicewomen's diaries and letters it is possible to demonstrate that even though many of the emotions and opportunities promised to women became a reality, such as overseas

³ Ruth Roach Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All": The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1986), 133. Here she is referring to domesticity, particularly what is seen as the naturalized position of women within the home, rather than the workplace public sphere.

work, only some of them were recorded by women with the same level of importance as had been placed on them in propaganda and media.

Examining the effort to influence women's emotions through the media, in propaganda posters, or newspapers, sheds light on how the government thought women should be feeling about their service, and what constituted "correct" displays of emotion. "Correct" displays of emotion in this instance will refer to women responding emotionally to their lives in ways that were seen as desirable for keeping up morale and not harming the war effort. As sociologist Arlie Russell Hochschild argued in 1979, society can try and control emotions and their expression, and people living within that society both perform "emotion work" and "feeling rules." This analysis suggests that emotions can be socially learned by creating regimes that construct and direct rules and constraints.⁴ These regimes consist of people actively altering the "degree or quality of an emotion or feeling," trying to fit to the expected guidelines of how they think they should be feeling and attempting to conform with social conventions already in place.⁵ In this way, servicewomen tried to "fit" their emotional displays with what was seen as correct for them during their time in the services. For example, an official press release for the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAF WD) noted that "they take the orders happily, for throughout the service there is a feeling of oneness and esprit de corps, of working with and for one another, and the Air Force, that cannot be denied."⁶ It

⁴ See here William Reddy's notion of "emotional regimes" in *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiii.

⁵ Arlie Russell Hochschild, "Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure," *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 3 (Nov. 1979): 561-4. *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

⁶ Royal Canadian Air Force, "The Women's Division" Article No. 4, Library and Archives Canada, 181.009 D87 box 40.

was correct for women to feel happy with their servicewomen position, moreover, it was expected. An examination of their letters and diaries is a useful means of examining how sentiments like these were expressed in the words of women themselves. It also shows when, why, and how they might have deviated from these correct displays of emotion, and how they reacted to having “incorrect” emotional responses.

Because the maintenance of support of war, through high morale, is perhaps the most important emotional focus of the government and military in wartime, morale will be a key focus of this thesis. One of the main comparisons that will be discussed in this study is how the services promoted emotions that maintained morale, and how servicewomen themselves maintained morale. Morale was seen as highly important to the war effort by almost everyone involved, but it was equally as hard to define. In 1941, American scholar Arthur Upham Pope simply stated in his survey on the importance of a positive attitude that “morale wins wars.”⁷ The Mass Observation unit of the Ministry of Information in Britain attempted to chart morale, loosely defining it as “the amount of interest people take in the war, and how worthwhile they feel it is.”⁸ This inability to ascertain what morale exactly was is shown in Canadian recruitment advertising, propaganda, and news articles. They show some ways that the military tried to influence or control women’s emotions in order to keep up morale, but they do not clearly define what it was. Even if its meaning was not always clear, morale was agreed upon as extremely important by the government and servicewomen because it affected how much

⁷ Arthur Upham Pope, “The Importance of Morale,” *The Journal of Educational Sociology* 15, 4 (December 1941): 195.

⁸ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 1.

effort was contributed to the war. In Second World War Canada the women's services and the media tried to influence women's emotions in order to try and keep up morale.

Women were bombarded with guidance on the correct displays of emotion soon after they enlisted, largely in order to try to maintain morale. Training manuals outlined the importance of morale and instructed higher-ranking officers on how to conduct themselves to inspire a spirit of high morale in recruits and servicewomen beneath them. Throughout, the definition of morale remained a slippery concept. For example, a "CWAAF Training Depot Officers and NCO's" manual defined morale as "a 'something' which inspires each individual member of a service or a country, and which gives to that service or that country a force which makes it well-nigh unconquerable."⁹ The manual continued to argue that "a service or country with a high morale has a possession far more precious than any material possession."¹⁰ It is clear that sustained high morale was seen as one of the most, if not the most, important weapon a country could have in its arsenal, even if it could only be described as a vague "something." During the war, Canadian and German morale were compared, using Britain's ability to "carry on" even during German bombings as an example of how Canada should persevere.¹¹ Military documentation like this reveals the emphasis that was put on morale, and the effort to try and convey its importance to servicewomen.

In addition to analyzing government propaganda and popular media, this study will focus on seven young women who all served in one of the three branches of the

⁹ "CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.'s Course," 1941, 181.9009 D 847 Box 40 W-300013. Library and Archives Canada, 1.

¹⁰ "CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.'s Course," 19411.

¹¹ "CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.'s Course," 19412.

Canadian military. Their writings demonstrate the variety of origins and experiences of servicewomen. Working in different parts of Canada and abroad, each either wrote letters or kept a diary that captured their experiences while in service. Catherine K. Drinkwater, from Orillia, Ont., enlisted in the Canadian Women's Army Corps November 11, 1941. Drinkwater trained in Ontario and Quebec and worked as a transport driver for about a year before she decided that she wanted to be sent overseas. She was accepted on the third overseas draft to England, leaving in the late summer of 1943. While overseas she served as Quartermaster in the Quartermaster Stores, looking after supplies. As the Germans were pushed back in 1944, Drinkwater was posted to France and then Belgium. When the war ended she finally was able to return back to Canada in October, 1945.

Kathleen Robson Roe was also a part of the Canadian Women's Army Corps, enlisting in September, 1941, near her home in southern Ontario. Robson Roe was first a part of the Red Cross Volunteer Corps before she officially enlisted in the CWAC, one of the first women to do so. She worked in the CWAC headquarters doing a myriad of jobs, including giving recruitment speeches. This lasted until she was picked for overseas work in 1942. She started her training for overseas at Ste. Anne de Bellevue in October of the same year, and made the trip overseas in November to London, England. Her training at Ste. Anne de Bellevue marks the beginning of her letter collection. Although her initial job overseas was not listed, one of her duties was recording details on chemical warfare. Later she switched to working with the Victoria Hospital and Medical School in 1943; in 1944 she recorded that she was working as a general clerk for the CWAC in London, hoping to be posted somewhere specific soon. Like Drinkwater, as the Germans were pushed back, she was also posted to France in 1944, moving into Belgium later that year,

and eventually into Germany in 1945. Robson Roe does not disclose what jobs she did while on the European continent, but she does complain of endless typing and shorthand which means that she was doing some sort of clerical work. She was able to return home in December, 1945.

Next, Molly Lamb Bobak joined the Canadian Women's Army Corps in 1942 in Vancouver, British Columbia. Her father was Harold Mortimer-Lamb, a prominent Canadian photographer and art critic. Before the war, Lamb attended the Vancouver School of Art in 1938, carrying her passion for art into her daily life. After art school she worked as a maid at a nearby resort, where she began to create an illustrated diary that combined her thoughts with caricatures.¹² She would continue using this format once she enlisted. She entitled her war diary, *W110278: The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* After her initial training in Vermillion, AB., Lamb worked in the canteen serving food and in the laundry, but continued to paint and sketch what she saw around her. She worked in Alberta and Quebec before being stationed in Ontario, where she had to opportunity to take a drafting course in Toronto.

At this time, she began to push to become an official war artist, which meant she would be officially allowed to record what was happening around her through art. In 1943, Lamb was assigned to Ottawa where she was told to draw the work happening at the Trades Training offices.¹³ Her paintings started to gain national acclaim around this time, showing at the National Gallery of Canada and being awarded various prizes. In 1944 she was reassigned to Toronto where she helped create sets for the Canadian Army

¹² Michelle Gewurtz, *Molly Lamb Bobak: Life and Work* (Art Canada Institute, 2019), 8.

¹³ Gewurtz, 13.

Show. Finally, in June of 1945, Lamb was posted overseas to London, England, and then Holland, as an official war artist to paint the aftermath of the war. This period of her life is not captured in her illustrated diary, which was completed before she made her trip overseas.

The next woman included in this analysis is Joyce Burgess Erickson, who joined the Royal Canadian Airforce Women's Division in 1943. Burgess was originally from Vancouver but travelled to Rockcliffe, Ont., for her basic training, recording the first five months of her experience in the Air Force. Within this timeframe she recorded her experience of lectures, drills, and social activities. Burgess especially focused on her relationships with the other women she served beside, as well as the many servicemen she met, dwelling on two in particular who had captured her special attention. She was also chosen out of basic training for the Force's Precision Squad, which was trained to tour Canada for publicity and recruitment purposes. The Precision Squad practiced multiple separate drill sequences, learning to march in the sequences for several minutes at a time.¹⁴ Burgess eventually attended the Montreal Wireless School in 1944, and served based out of Trenton, Ont., and the Queen Charlotte Islands, BC.

Lastly are two women who provided fewer sources as insights into the lives of servicewomen. Rosemary Robb Pimintal, who served the Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service from 1943-45, kept her diary/log as part of a scrap book. She was born in Ottawa, Ont., and trained in Galt once she enlisted, eventually serving in both Ottawa and Halifax, NS, at the HMCS Bytown and HMCS Stadacona bases. Placed in between acceptance letters, greeting cards, and photographs in her scrapbook was a day-to-day

¹⁴ Annalise Klingbeil Aklingsbeil, "Chef cooked so 'men may fly,'" *Calgary Herald*, November 9, 2013.

record of the things she saw or did while in service. Exact dates are unclear, but she at least wrote from January to May of 1943. Her notes mostly record daily activity without much embellishment, and little on personal feelings. Even so, it is possible to read between the lines. For example, by including this log in her scrapbook she presumably meant for it to be viewed, a sign perhaps of a certain pride in service. Similar to Robb, Eve Milne also joined the WRCNS in 1943, but recorded just the first few days she trained at Galt, Ont., from August 22 until August 25, 1943. Even though it is a short, hastily written source, Milne gives insight into the thoughts of servicewomen during the first few days of their new lives. Little is known about Milne, research has revealed no information on her background or life after the war. It is also unclear if she expected this log to be viewed, as it was placed in a scrapbook by the Vancouver W.R.C.N.S. Association near or after her passing.

By looking at these women's individual narratives, such as their letters or diaries, it is possible to understand something of these Canadian servicewomen's emotional responses to the Second World War and their place within it. This is important because it offers a new angle of focus on narratives of war. Where past research has often focused on women as a collective, there is real value to be found in individual experiences and responses to war.¹⁵ Doing so shows how their emotional experiences were influenced by propaganda, state-created documents, and the media. The government, and popular media both tried to evoke positive emotional feelings in propaganda to mobilize women for the war effort and maintain morale. They emphasized, for example, the pride that came from

¹⁵ Examples of this include: W. Hugh Conrad, *"Athene" The Canadian Women's Army Corps* (Dartmouth, NS.: Writing and Editorial Services, 1983), Mary Ziegler, *We Serve that Men May Fly: The Story of the Women's Division Royal Canadian Air Force* (Hamilton, Ont.: The R.C.A.F. (W.D.) Association, 1973), or Pierson's *"They're Still Women After All."*

joining the armed forces.¹⁶ These individual women, however, did not always express sentiments in their diaries and letters about their own experiences as servicewomen that matched these popular and military efforts to shape their emotions and actions.

Historiography

The history of emotions is a relatively new field that has seen significant development in recent years and can be useful for studying servicewomen in the Second World War. While this field is providing new and exciting insights, it does not come without its challenges. There is no single accepted framework for conducting historical research into emotions, allowing for different theories of how it should be conducted. One of the most prominent of these has been “emotionology” produced by Peter and Carol Stearns. Emotionology is the study of attitudes and standards that society maintains in regard to emotions and how to acceptably express them, and also how institutions can reflect and encourage these standards which regulate human conduct.¹⁷ Barbara Rosenwein proposes a slightly different theory and framework for studying past emotions, stating that people live in “emotional communities”. Rosenwein defines emotional communities as similar to other communities that operate within society, such as families or neighbourhoods, but with a focus on systems of feeling in which communities evaluate emotions, what should be tolerated or encouraged, the nature of people’s emotional bonds, and so on. In short, the community regulates how emotions are

¹⁶ For an example of this see the film “Proudly She Marches”, created in 1943 to demonstrate to women the benefits of joining one of Canada’s armed forces. https://www.nfb.ca/film/proudly_she_marches/.

¹⁷ Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (Oct. 1985): 813.

expressed within it based on how it defines, encourages, or condemns their expression.¹⁸ These two frameworks will both be used for this examination of Canada's servicewomen. Their emotional lives and experiences cannot be studied without taking into consideration the social rules governing them, and their individual reactions to these rules.¹⁹ I will be considering how servicewomen in the Second World War experienced different emotional communities, and the norms to which they subscribed, when they moved more directly into a traditionally male-dominated public sphere, constantly shifting and adjusting to these norms.

When scholars have studied Canadian women during the Second World War their arguments have largely centered on the maintenance of femininity and changing gender roles. Ruth Pierson is one of the leading historians of Canadian women's involvement in the Second World War. Her research, most significantly her book, *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood*, focuses on the social construction of Canadian womanhood during the war and immediately after its end.²⁰ She concluded that women being allowed to enter the workforce during the war did not permanently upset gendered work-home divisions, and furthermore only served to "intensify the traditional demands on women to be emotional supportive of men."²¹ While she does include some testimonies of servicewomen, she mainly focuses on different "official" sources, such as military memorandums, workplace meeting minutes, and

¹⁸ Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 842.

¹⁹ Susan J. Matt, "Recovering the Invisible: Methods for the Historical Study of Emotions," in *Doing Emotions History*, eds. Susan J. Matt and Peter N. Stearns (Urbana, Chicago, and Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2014), 46.

²⁰ Pierson, 15.

²¹ Pierson, 220.

government-issued propaganda. Pierson effectively argues that Canadian womanhood was constructed, policed, and maintained throughout the war, but without considering how bottom-up personal approaches, such as how women engaged with these national narratives and parameters, interplayed with these constructions. The question of how women reacted emotionally to wartime changes, such as excitement or fear at the prospect of serving, is necessary for a full understanding of their experience. This is a gap in the academic literature relating the Second World War and Canadian women's emotional responses that needs to be addressed.

In a similar vein to the work of Pierson, Maureen Honey's *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* provides insight into the experiences of American women during the Second World War. Anxiety over challenges to traditional notions of femininity in American women mirrored the anxiety felt in Canada. Like Pierson, Honey demonstrates how women being invited into the men's sphere did not equal a legitimization of their entry into non-traditional occupations. In other words, even though they were allowed to enter they were not completely accepted, or their work normalized.²² Honey's work operates as a case study of the American Second World War propaganda industry, specifically drawing upon images of women in advertising and magazine fiction. She suggests that the failure of war advertisements to alter "traditional ideas about female capacities" was due to propaganda "unifying the home front to a top-down impetus for social change that left the new images vulnerable to swift annihilation."²³ Social change may have allowed for American women to enter the

²² Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 1.

²³ Honey, 17.

work force, but the methods to do so made sure that the open door was only a temporary solution to fill wartime labour needs. Like Pierson's work, Honey does not consider the emotional responses of American women to these changes and their personal experiences, or how propaganda targeted women's emotions in addition to their femininity.

Even though there is a lack of scholarly analysis given to women's individual experiences in relation to national social constructions of Canadian womanhood, there is no shortage of published individual narratives. Memoirs of Canadian women's service are not hard to come by, either in full biographical forms or anecdotal collections. For example, Marial M. Mosher recounted her time as a senior officer in the Canadian Women's Army Corps (CWAC) and Sue Ward also published a biography on her time in the CWAC.²⁴ Also useful are anecdotal collections, for example, those published by Francis Martin Day, Phyliss Spence, and Barbara Ladouceur, as well as Sherry Pringle.²⁵ All are collections of short selections detailing the individual experiences of Canadian women at home and abroad.

However, most published Canadian women's narratives consist of them looking back at their experiences, there are few examples of published diaries or letters written during the Second World War. This is problematic because when looking back at wartime service, women tend to focus on major events that happened. By doing this, the smaller emotional ups and downs of day to day life are forgotten, or simply overgeneralized. An example of two letter collections that have been published that help fill this gap are by

²⁴ Marial M. Mosher, *Remembering: One Woman's World War II Story* (Glenhaven Press, 2008), Sue Ward, *One Gal's Army* (Prince George, BC: Caitlin Press, 1996).

²⁵ Francis Martin Day, Phyliss Spence, and Barbara Ladouceur, *Women Overseas: Memoirs of the Canadian Red Cross Corps* (Vancouver: Ronsdale Press, 1998), Sherry Pringle, *Extraordinary Women, Extraordinary Times: Canadian Women of WWII* (Ottawa: Borealis Press, 2015).

Catherine K. Drinkwater and Mary Hawkins Buch, however, they do not engage at length with how they reacted at the time to emotional expectations of servicewomen.²⁶ The lack of diaries published may point to personal privacy issues, although in 2015 the illustrated diary of Molly Lamb Bobak was published online by the Government of Canada. While letters were meant to be read, albeit usually by someone intimately connected with the writer, diaries sometimes acted solely as a self reflection space, and could be more personal to the author than letters. The private nature of these types of diaries makes it harder to find them published, as many women might have felt uncomfortable having their inner thoughts widely read, even years after the fact. This is not true for all diaries or women, sometimes it is obvious that the diaries are intended for an audience, either immediately or eventually within and after the author's lifetime. For example, the illustrated diary of Molly Lamb Bobak is formatted to read like a newsletter, suggesting that there is an intended audience beyond herself. Analyzing the emotions recorded in these latter types of sources can give better insight into how women viewed their wartime service.

A collection that comes the closest to critically analyzing how women felt about their wartime service is Carolyn Gossage's *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)*. Gossage's collection is a mixture of content about servicewomen, describing the stages they would have gone through in their wartime path, next to short personal anecdotes from those who served. Although she discusses both the creation of social frameworks and individual stories, she does not compare them or

²⁶ Catherine K. Drinkwater, *Letters to Edgewood Farm from a Canadian Girl in World War II* (Canada: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, 2002), Mary Hawkins Buch, *Props on Her Sleeve: The Wartime Letters of a Canadian Airwoman*, edited by Carolyn Gossage (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997).

analyze how they affected each other. While she may have just been allowing the juxtaposition of both sections to speak for themselves, there would have been real value in further analyzing how women were either operating within or breaking with emotional standards and guidelines. This difficulty is not just with Gossage but characterizes the historiography more broadly. One of the main gaps in Canadian history involving women and the Second World War is that scholarly sources have failed to consider Canadian women's individual narratives and emotions and how they perpetuate or conflict with wartime culture. This thesis, which merges the study of national social standards and guidelines for emotional expression, including popular media, with primary individual narratives, aims for a more in-depth look at how servicewomen experienced the war.

Although there are prominent gaps in the study of Canadian women's emotions during the Second World War, especially in relation to emotional standards and individual responses, recently historians have begun to turn their attention to the intersection of emotions, women, and war in a multitude of circumstances. Due to a lack of Canadian-centered sources on female emotions and the Second World War, secondary sources analysing other nations, such as Britain, the United States, or Australia, are helpful due to similarities in experiences. Scholars such as Carol Acton, Lucy Noakes, and Maureen Honey, along with others, have provided valuable insight into these experiences.

Carol Acton has opened up a great deal of discussion through her examination of British and Irish women's diaries and letters during the First and Second World Wars. Acton asserts that the exclusion of women from the writing of war history can often be attributed to their exclusions from combat. This, in turn, excludes narratives that highlight

women's interdependence with men in times of war.²⁷ In response to this point, fully separating women's experiences from men takes away from the reality that their emotions were often highly responsive to and manipulated by the actions of prominent menfolk within their lives. Women's place within the Second World War is almost always separated in literature from that of men. Stand-alone narratives, such as W. Hugh Conrad's *Athene* or Mary Ziegler's *We Serve that Men May Fly*, exemplify this separation. Lucy Noakes' *Women in the British Army* or Doris Weatherford's *American Women and World War II* demonstrate that this was not just a Canadian phenomenon. It is important to note that this does not mean that all women's narratives were dependant on those of men, just that it was an aspect of their experience that should not be ignored. This is one point that needs to be considered when examining Canadian women's emotions during the Second World War, that they were often intertwined with or affected by their relationships with men, especially considering that they were entering traditionally masculine work spaces.

Writing during times of war also allowed women to reflect on their own selfhood. Carol Acton has also written extensively on the role of women's war writing in the creation of self and maintenance of emotions. By considering letters and diaries written by British and Irish women during the First and Second World Wars, Acton has demonstrated that women were aware of how a wartime culture not only affected emotional norms, but also provided an opportunity for them to create a new wartime persona for themselves.²⁸ Similarly, Alison Twells, in her research focusing on wartime

²⁷ Carol Acton, "Writing and Waiting: The First World War Correspondence Between Vera Brittain and Roland Leighton," *Gender and History*, 11 (1999): 54–83.

²⁸ Carol Acton, "Diverting the Gaze: The Unseen Text in Women's War Writing," *College Literature* vol. 32, no. 2 (Spring 2004): 53+.

diaries, argues that women who wrote about their wartime experiences used the diary format to create a wartime persona, outlining a place where they could construct a new self that fit with wartime standards.²⁹ This could include altering how they displayed their emotions to fit the self they wished to portray, As defined by Arlie Russell Hochschild, women performed “emotion work” by which they could evoke, shape, or suppress certain feelings to fit a desired narrative.³⁰ They may have used sources like popular media or propaganda to help them do this. The wartime self could be created by women on a conscious or sub-conscious basis. Some may not have realized that they were adjusting themselves to fit wartime stereotypes, such as the proud servicewoman. Building themselves up through the courage they gained in the process of their war work, writing themselves into history through their diaries and letters, or being forced to adjust to the grief and sadness they either directly felt or saw around themselves are just a few of the ways that women emotionally adapted to war. In both scenarios, women chose how, and which, emotions to express in consideration of what was expected of them, as they were familiar with from wartime propaganda,

In another examination of British women’s emotions during the Second World War that shows the benefit of including international sources, Lucy Noakes highlights the importance of managing emotions, particularly grief. In her article “Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain,” Noakes argues that previous instances of mass bereavement, such as the pain from the First World War and other interwar

Carol Acton, “‘Stepping into History’: Reading the Second World War through Irish Women’s Diaries,” *Irish Studies Review* vol. 18, no. 1 (February 2010): 39-56.

²⁹ Alison Twells, “‘Went into Raptures’: Reading Emotion in the Ordinary Wartime Diary, 1941-1946,” *Women’s History Review* vol. 25, no. 1 (2016): 144.

³⁰ Arlie Russell Hochschild, “Emotion Work, Feeling Rules, and Social Structure,” *American Journal of Sociology* 83, no. 3 (Nov. 1979): 561.

disasters, led the British response to grief during war to change to one of increased stoicism and wartime participation rather than prolonged periods of grieving.³¹ This article is important in part because it outlines the ways in which women were still considered to be more likely to lose control of their emotions. It also highlights how this belief justified the state's interest in how it could reduce the negative impact of grief on morale. Since Canada's ties to Britain were quite strong during the war, and many Canadian women were posted overseas in Britain, it is possible that these women both at home and abroad were influenced by Britain's emotional wartime culture. Her work plays explicitly off of Geoffrey Gorer's, who surmised, in his book, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain*, that women who bore the weight of loss, and yet attempted to carry on life in a normal state, were more likely to experience suffering than men.³² Noakes' work demonstrates a perceived stoicism that grew out of the effort to manage grief. This highlights the importance of studying women dealing with grief during the Second World War, because norms denoting correct displays of grief had shifted since the First World War, placing them in new territory where they had to figure out how to deal with grief in a separate way than the generation before did. Women during wartime have often been portrayed as strong figures, sacrificing their menfolk for the ultimate cause. In *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief*, Suzanne Evans makes numerous connections between ancient martyred

³¹ Lucy Noakes, "Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain," *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 8, no. 1 (2015): 76.

³² Geoffrey Gorer, *Death, Grief, and Mourning in Contemporary Britain* (London: Cresset Press, 1965), cited in Lucy Noakes, "Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain," *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 8, no. 1 (January 8, 2015): 74.

mother figures and the mothers of soldiers during the First World War.³³ It is entirely possible that the mothers Evans describes dealt with grief, or the possibility of loss, by internalizing these types of emotions of sacrificial pride.

Sharing Noakes' emphasis on the importance of the interwar period, Joy Damousi studied how grief was managed by Australian mothers in the interwar period, and into the Second World War. Damousi focused on women who had lost sons during the First World War and the effects that national glorification and commemoration had on their lives after the fact. She argues that while the women who lost sons were considered "winners" at the time of their loss because of their sacrifice, after the war they felt they became "losers" because the grief and pain associated with their loss had been denied and rebranded as glory and honour.³⁴ Damousi's attention to the "mythologies"³⁵ that become a central part of war, namely the glorification of death as a necessary sacrifice in the name of peace, and state propaganda's use of this narrative.³⁶ demonstrate a restriction on women's grief. She furthers her analysis of how women's right to grieve was restricted by considering their roles and presences in memorial services, charting how sonless mothers were at first given their own distinction, then complied into a single group with all grieving women, until finally their presence at certain memorial services, such as the dawn service on Australia's Anzac Day, was explicitly questioned.³⁷ Damousi's article gives an interesting insight into how women dealt with their losses in a highly controlled

³³ Suzanne Evans, *Mothers of Heroes, Mothers of Martyrs: World War One and the Politics of Grief* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

³⁴ Joy Damousi, "Private Loss, Public Mourning: Motherhood, Memory, and Grief in Australia during the Inter-war Years," *Women's History Review*, 8, no. 2 (1999): 366.

³⁵ Damousi, 366.

³⁶ Damousi, 368.

³⁷ Damousi, 371-2.

emotional climate, specifically by showing how protest can be used as a way of dealing with grief. While it does not address Canadian women, or deal with the direct timeline of the Second World War, it provides a starting point on how to examine possible ways in which women's emotional expressions concerning the combination of war culture and loss can be influenced by the society they live within.

Wartime advertising has been widely studied, with scholars considering both its intent and influence. Propaganda and advertisements for the women's services produced by the government was intended to influence or manipulate the feelings of women, mainly concerning feelings of pride, guilt, or excitement. Kathleen Ryan theorizes that in the US propaganda for the American Navy and Coast Guard targeted women in ways that "both inspired changes in behaviour while at the same time reinforce[d] societal norms."³⁸ She argues that posters used specific visual images to counteract rumors about military women's character, which both reassured family members and appealed to potential recruits.³⁹ Like Ryan, Michelle Denise Smith argued that the material published in prominent Canadian magazines specifically targeted women, creating images of women completely dedicating themselves to the war effort, combining their narratives with romance (the "preferred genre" of women) to soothe anxieties about war.⁴⁰ Looking at images of women in wartime-era magazines allows Smith to explore women's wartime roles within Canada. Melissa A. McEuen's *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* also focuses on the messages used by

³⁸ Kathleen M. Ryan, "'Don't miss your great opportunity': patriotism and propaganda in Second World War recruitment," *Visual Studies* 27, 3 (November 2012): 248.

³⁹ Ryan, 248.

⁴⁰ Michelle Denise Smith, "'Hello, Canada! It's fine to have you here': Canadian Nationhood, Women, and Popular Fiction during the Second World War," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 44, 1 (2009): 5.

the media, arguing that American women embraced government and media directives about proper attire and attitudes, and manipulated those messages to the point where their “attitudes and bearing” outgrew what the nation had originally expected of them.⁴¹

In contrast to the study of government propaganda and media during the Second World War, the study of Canadian servicewomen’s emotional responses to the War can be built upon studies of women in the First World War. Linda J. Quiney argues that Newfoundland women during the First World War were eager to help in the war effort due to an affection of “imperialist sentiment,” or patriotism, which was encouraged by organizations such as the Canadian Red Cross Society and the St. John Ambulance Association.⁴² While patriotism is not necessarily an emotion itself, it is made up of two prominent emotions, pride and love, in the response to one’s country.⁴³ Paul Ward theorizes that in the First World War British women showed their patriotism in any way possible, developing acts of “day-to-day patriotism” in the attempt to contribute to the war effort.⁴⁴ He also suggests that women sought validation for their patriotic efforts; to show that they were doing their best to help win the war.⁴⁵ Wearing a uniform helped to display the level of their devotion to their country. Susan Grayzel argues that, even though British women’s service during the First World War was controversial at the time, putting on the symbolic khaki-coloured uniform was still seen as the “ultimate badge of

⁴¹ Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 177.

⁴² Linda J Quiney, “‘Bravely and Loyally They Answered the Call’: St. John Ambulance, the Red Cross, and the Patriotic Service of Canadian Women During the Great War,” *History of Intellectual Culture* 5, no. 1 (2005): 2.

⁴³ Rick Kosterman and Seymour Feshbach, “Toward a Measure of Patriotic and Nationalistic Attitudes,” *Political Psychology* 10, no. 2 (June 1989): 271.

⁴⁴ Paul Ward, “‘Britain’s Women Say Go’: Women’s Patriotism in the First World War,” *Twentieth Century British History* 1, no. 1 (January 2001): 32.

⁴⁵ Ward, “Britain’s Women Say Go,” 34.

patriotic service.”⁴⁶ This is similar to other views on women’s patriotic actions, concluding that it was true pride and devotion to nation that inspired their participation.

Patriotism as an emotional motivator for wartime service was not limited to the Allied forces. When considering female German pilots during the Second World War, Evelyn Zegenhagen notes that women’s “patriotic feelings” were among the top three reasons that they sought positions in the Luftwaffe when available.⁴⁷ Cynthia Toman agrees that patriotic feelings spurred Canadian military nurses in the Second World War into action. Alongside the desire to advance their skills, Toman argues that in uniting together to “win the war”, nursing sisters eventually perceived and portrayed themselves “as comrades and patriotic citizens.”⁴⁸ All of these sources demonstrate that patriotic feelings, consisting of pride and love for one’s country, were a significant part of servicewomen’s experiences, either as reasons to join or validation for joining.

Studies have not only focused on positive emotions during war, such as pride, but they have also focused on the negative effects, such as how detrimental it can be to mental health. Examining the emotional responses of women to the war in an alternate way, Mark Jackson has provided a stimulating discussion about stress among British women air force personnel during the Second World War. In a chapter entitled “Men and Women under Stress: Neuropsychiatric Models of Resilience During and After the Second World War,” he found that female pilots were diagnosed with stress-related

⁴⁶ Susan R. Grayzel, “‘The Outward and Visible Sign of Her Patriotism’: Women, Uniforms, and National Service during the First World War,” *Twentieth Century British History* 8, no. 2 (1997): 152.

⁴⁷ Evelyn Zegenhagen, “German Women Pilots at War, 1939 to 1945,” *Air Power History* 56, no. 4 (Winter 2009): 22.

⁴⁸ Cynthia Toman, *An Officer and a Lady: Canadian Military Nursing and the Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press: 2007), 204.

conditions more frequently than men, and that this may have been due to existing stereotypes about their psychological vulnerability.⁴⁹ While demonstrating the inequality in diagnosing stress-related conditions between men and women, Jackson is still acknowledging that stress and anxiety played major roles in the work women did during the Second World War, and how these feelings affected their positions and choices throughout its span. It also demonstrates that women were seen as emotionally weaker than men, which means that women were treated differently than men in consideration of which emotions (such as doubt or anxiety) were expected of them.

Keeping in mind these scholarly works, Chapter One, alongside an introduction to the forces, will examine some of the print, audio, and visual propaganda produced during the war that targeted women's emotions both before and after they enlisted. The first chapter will demonstrate that these forms of media directly tried to influence women's emotions in order to maintain morale. This section will also briefly cover efforts within the services to regulate servicewomen's behaviour once enlisted. The second and third chapters will examine the emotions expressed in the letter collections of Mary Buch Hawkins, Catherine K. Drinkwater, and Kathleen Robson Roe, as well as the diaries of Joyce Burgess Erickson and Molly Lamb Bobak and logs of Eve Milne and Rosemary Robb. Chapter Two will cover how these women experienced excitement, pride, humour, and love, and how these emotions influenced morale. Chapter Three will analyze negative emotions, such as homesickness, boredom, sadness, grief, and fear or anxiety. In these chapters, I will provide insight into the individual experiences of servicewomen in

⁴⁹ Mark Jackson, "Men and Women under Stress: Neuropsychiatric Models of Resilience During and After the Second World War," in *Stress in Post-War Britain, 1945-85, Studies for the Society for the Social History of Medicine, Volume 23*, editor Mark Jackson (New York: Routledge, 2015), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK436961/>.

contrast to the emotional rhetoric presented in the media and in official regulations that targeted them, specifically in relation to morale. This will demonstrate that the experiences servicewomen valued and recorded often differed from what was portrayed in propaganda or the media. Being aware of what was emotionally required of them, servicewomen worked to maintain their morale, recognising it as importance for the success of the war effort.

Chapter One: Targeting Women's Emotions on an Official Level

Government propaganda and popular media, like newspapers and magazines, were essential for not only drawing in recruits, but also for establishing the emotional standards that were set for Canada's servicewomen and making sure that they recognized them. Combined with material produced within the services, propaganda and the media spent significant effort trying to manipulate and standardize servicewomen's emotions. The majority of this effort was spent trying to maintain high levels of morale, which was seen as integral to the war effort, and eventual victory. Morale was defined by the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force as a collective "something" that was needed to win the war; a weapon that made a nation unconquerable.¹ Morale was a combination of attitude and behaviour, and high morale was marked by feelings/attitudes of "cheerfulness, calmness, support for leaders, belief in ultimate victory, and a commitment to the task at hand," as well as behaviour cues like "cooperativeness and neighbourliness."² These markers were portrayed in propaganda and the media, along with efforts to promote feelings associated with pride, patriotism, and excitement, to manipulate women into joining through guilt, and downplaying negative feelings, such as homesickness or doubt. Ultimately, these sources tried to comment on and set standards for servicewomen's emotions, demonstrating what their participation in the services should look like.

¹ "CWAAF Administrative Course, Discipline – Lecture One," in "CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.'s Course" 1941, 181.9009 D 847 Box 40 W-300013. Library and Archives Canada, 1.

² Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.

Enlistment was not initially a possibility but, during the first couple of years of the war it became apparent that by allowing women into Canada's armed forces more men could be released for service elsewhere. Women had already taken over some of the jobs in civilian workplaces that had been considered traditionally male, such as in factories, to expand production and replace men who enlisted. There was a greater cultural hurdle involved with women joining the armed forces, which, aside from nursing units, had been strictly masculine in the past. This fear was centered around women losing their morality once they enlisted and the "masculinizing" effect the service would have on them, becoming "loose" or "mannish" as a result.³ Doubts about women entering the military were somewhat eased by the knowledge that women's services had already been successfully instituted in Britain. With a greater need for manpower due to the geographically much closer threat of Germany, Britain had allowed for the enlistment of 2,000 women into the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) in the fall of 1938, and then formed the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) in the spring and summer of 1939.⁴ These British services provided a solid foundation for Canada to consult when deciding to create their own. Much of the framework for the Canadian women's services explicitly used the British versions as a guide, even going so far as to bring British servicewomen to Canada to provide the first few months of crucial training.⁵

³ Leisa D. Meyer, "Creating G.I. Jane: The Regulation of Sexuality and Sexual Behaviour in the Women's Army Corps during World War II," *Feminist Studies* 18, no. 3 (Fall 1992):583-4.

⁴ Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 30.

⁵ Maeve Giffin, "The Elite Women of Canada: Women's Royal Canadian Naval Service, aka the Wrens, Served Canada with Pride," *Esprit de Corps Canadian Military Magazine*, February 15, 2017, <http://espritdecorps.ca/womenindefence/the-elite-women-of-canada-womens-royal-canadian-naval-service-aka-the-wrens-served-canada-with-pride>.

Although Canada's national women's military services did not start up until a few years into the war, women were not idle during its earlier stages. At the same time as the creation of British women's services, many Canadian women started to form their own voluntary groups. One of the first groups to begin to mobilize in preparation for what seemed to be an inevitable war was the Victoria B.C. Ancillary Corps. Made up of women from the Victoria, British Columbia, area, it formed in October of 1938, just after Britain gave the green light for women to enter the ATS. After organizing thirteen similar groups, B.C. created the province-wide B.C. Women's Service Corps, which later disbanded and became part of the Red Cross Volunteer Corps.⁶ The formation of volunteer groups like this were not isolated actions, other women's service corps also formed in Nova Scotia and Alberta in the late 1930s, and the trend continued in provinces all over the country. The government received frequent pleas and petitions from women around the country asking for an official nationwide women's military service for over two years before any action was taken.⁷

The first branch to institute a national women's service was the Royal Canadian Air Force (RCAF). On July 2, 1941, the RCAF created the Canadian Women's Auxiliary Air Force (CWAAF), which later changed its name to the Royal Canadian Air Force Women's Division (RCAF WD), modeled after the British service of the same name. A press release in September of 1941 outlined how the CWAAF would be organized, stating that, after conducting coast-to-coast sittings, 150 women would be selected for a five-week instructional course and would form the initial basis of the division.⁸ Women were

⁶ Gossage, 32.

⁷ Gossage, 33-34.

⁸ Gossage, 43-4. Two travelling RCAF selection boards were deployed to hold sittings, talk with potential recruits, and collect applications from interested women.

initially hired only to fill clerical, administrative, and other support roles to release men for service, but the job opportunities for women expanded as need grew. Jobs as parachute riggers, laboratory assistants, and various positions in electrical and mechanical trades eventually became available to them.⁹ Along with an expansion in their work, the numbers of enlisted women also expanded. First estimates of women's enlistments had predicted a maximum of 2,000 recruits in the first year, and a total maximum of 7,000 recruits in the course of the war. Recruitment numbers more than exceeded these estimates, with around 4,000 women enlisting in the first year, and approximately 17,000 members total by the end of the war.¹⁰ Of the three women's military services that formed, the RCAF WD sent the most women overseas to serve with Canadian squadrons at the Great Britain RCAF headquarters.¹¹

These expanded job opportunities were significant. Before the Second World War, the closest that Canadian women came to being part of the military was the Nursing Service of the Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps, established permanently in 1906.¹² Despite having allowed women into the Army on a conditional, strictly medical, basis in the early twentieth century, the Army was second of the three military services to start recruiting following the RCAF. The CWAC had a similar function as the RCAF WD in that it was intended to take on certain tasks in order to relieve men for service overseas. Aside from clerical and stenographic work, women in the CWAC could also take jobs as

⁹ "Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military," *Veterans Affairs Canada*, Government of Canada (Accessed November 1, 2018), <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-and-war/military>.

¹⁰ "Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military," and "Royal Canadian Press Release, 10 A.M. E.D.T." A Sinclair files, Library and Archives Canada, MG 30 E 391 (August 23, 1943), 1.

¹¹ "Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military."

¹² Pierson, 95.

light mechanical transport vehicle drivers, cooks, telephone operators, and messengers, with possible positions expanding in the same way the RCAF WD did to include more traditionally masculine jobs in mechanical fields and as radar operators.¹³ This demonstrates that, initially, it was expected that women would only be able to handle jobs similar to what they had been doing in the civilian workforce, such as clerical work, but they soon broke through these expectations, proving they could handle more “masculine” jobs.

The last service to enlist women in Canada was the Royal Canadian Naval Service (RCNS), instituting the Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service (WRCNS or “Wrens”) in July 1942. Originally the Navy did not think that it would need the same number of women to cover men’s positions as the Air Force or Army would, being much smaller in size, and thus did not see the need to create a separate women’s service.¹⁴ It is also possible that the Navy was waiting to see how smooth the transition of women was into the other services before they admitted them into their own, learning from the experiences of other branches.¹⁵ Since there were no Canadian women who actually had any naval experience, the Navy relied on women from the British Women’s Royal Naval Service for guidance to help form the Canadian organization.¹⁶ Like the other services, originally Wren’s roles were purely clerical and administrative, but expanded to include jobs such as on-shore radar operators and coding technicians as the war progressed and more men

¹³ Gossage, 42, and “Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military,” *Veterans Affairs Canada*, Government of Canada (Accessed November 1, 2018), <http://www.veterans.gc.ca/eng/remembrance/those-who-served/women-and-war/military>.

¹⁴ Emilie Anne Plows, “Serving their Country: The Story of the Wrens, 1942-1946,” *Canadian Military Journal* vol. 9, no. 2 (date unknown): 83.

¹⁵ Gossage, 48, and Laura Allan, “The Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service,” *Canadian Naval Review* 3, no. 3 (Fall 2007): 18.

¹⁶ Maeve Giffin, “The Elite Women of Canada.”

were needed at sea.¹⁷ Unlike the other two services, they did not start off as an auxiliary formation, but were directly part of the RCNS from the beginning.¹⁸ The Navy enlisted the fewest women throughout the war out of all of the services. This was not due to any actual rejection by Canadian women, in fact the WRCNS could be considered to have the easiest recruiting experience, profiting from observing the other services' recruiting efforts.¹⁹ The main reason that the WRCNS experienced the lowest total recruitment numbers was because they physically did not require the same number of women recruits that the other services needed to run smoothly. Compared to the relatively large numbers of women in the other services throughout the war, the WRCNS only grew to around 7,000 members at its maximum.²⁰ Although not the largest service, Wrens were still an integral part of the Navy and contributed greatly to its smooth operation.

The first step to joining one of these three services for women would have been recruitment. This would not have been possible without the widespread efforts of propaganda and advertising. It is important to keep in mind, before examining these sources, that women were not actually thought to be entering these male-centered spaces on a permanent basis. As Ruth Pierson concluded, the message sent out to women was that even though they had achieved entering the masculine sphere of the military, it changed nothing about their "nature and place in Canadian society."²¹ Similar ideas were seen in other countries, with the unified message that while the patriotic commitments of women were to be emphasized, any desire by women to gain better jobs and higher wages

¹⁷ "Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military."

¹⁸ Plows, 85.

¹⁹ Gossage, 52.

²⁰ "Canada Remembers Women in the Canadian Military."

²¹ Pierson, 133.

was to be largely ignored in initial recruitment advertising.²² Women were needed to fill gaps in the military left by men going overseas to fight, but this did not mean that their femininity or place in society had to be sacrificed.

This changed somewhat as the war progressed and more women were needed to replace men. For example, a recruitment advertisement from August 1943 tried to convince women to join by focusing on the fact that pay for those in the Army, Navy, and Air Force had increased by 15 to 30 percent. Furthermore, the desperation to enlist more women was made obvious by targeting married women in advertisements, promising that they would still receive their dependant's allowance upon joining.²³ This is just a sample of how recruitment efforts changed to try and convince more women to join up, even as they still placed women as dependant on men. These changes tried to elicit interest in the women's services, and reinforce the idea that enlisting was the correct choice, while still making it clear that their place in society was not changing.

“It's Our Battle, Too!": Targeting Emotions in Recruitment Advertising

Targeting women's emotions in recruitment advertising was a main strategy used by those in charge of the women's military recruitment operations to get women to feel that they had to enlist. For this plan to be successful, the messages they produced had to be easily conveyed to a widespread audience. The use of print media, radio, and film to convey recruitment messages was employed on a large scale. One of the most commonly used mediums was print, specifically posters, magazines, and newspaper articles. All

²² Bilge Yesil, “‘Who Said this is a Man's War?’: Propaganda, Advertising Discourse and the Representation of War Worker Women during the Second World War,” *Media History* vol. 10, no. 2 (2004): 104.

²³ “Women's Pay in the Army – Navy – Air Force Increased,” *Winnipeg Tribune*, August 3, 1943, 10.

three of these print types were found in public spaces and in military base canteens, making them readily available to servicewomen and civilians alike. Mary Hawkins Buch wrote in a letter to her friend, “There are all the large newspapers in the Canteen, and some magazines.”²⁴ Propaganda films were produced by the National Film Board at this time as well, but it is unclear how frequently they would have been watched by women.²⁵ It is known that some propaganda films, such as the RCAF’s *Wings on Her Shoulder*, were shown over six-month periods in the newsreel sections that played before films, debuting in over 800 theatres.²⁶ Even so, the women in this study only write about the popular films that they attended, not what was shown before them. Radio was almost as common as print media, with almost every home in Canada having a set. As well, leisure rooms in stations had them for servicewomen to listen to. Services, like the CWAC, took advantage of this, producing five-minute radio spots and “flash” announcements to play on many popular national, regional, and local networks.²⁷ Women recorded listening to the radio, for example, Kathleen Robson Roe noted in her diary that she listened to various speeches and programs numerous times on the radio while serving overseas in London.²⁸ These types of sources will be the basis of the first section of this chapter, demonstrating the different ways media targeted women’s emotions.

²⁴ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, February 26, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve: The Wartime Letters of a Canadian Airwoman*, edited by Carolyn Gossage (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 25.

²⁵ For example, two propaganda films, *Proudly She Marches* and *Wings on Her Shoulders*, were produced by the National Film Board to combat whispering campaigns, but

²⁶ Jack C. Ellis and Betsy A. McLane, *New History of Documentary Film* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2005), 122-125.

²⁷ Pierson, 138.

²⁸ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, June 7, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.* (Toronto: KAKABEKA Publishing Co. Ltd., 1975), 102-3, this entry details her listening to radio broadcast.

Print media was the most common form of propaganda and advertising directed at potential recruits. This was because the creation of newer, and cheaper, printing methods made the mass production of printed propaganda widely available, and therefore more commonly seen by women.²⁹ Similar to other countries that had entered the war, Canada enacted an aggressive propaganda campaign that targeted much of the population. Posters were especially important because, unlike other print media, they did not need to be sought out by women but could be posted in public areas that young women may have regularly traversed, such as the post office.³⁰ Aside from posters, newspapers were another readily available source for women. From small towns to bigger urban centers, each had its own newspaper, sometimes several. They were the most up-to-date source of news about the war and were widely read by many Canadians. Because of this wide readership, they also made ideal spaces for advertising and propaganda. Those in charge of recruitment, such as the Combined Services Committee, acknowledged this and in 1943 paid for “1000-line recruitment advertisements to be run in all daily newspapers across Canada and for full-page ads to appear in magazines and in the rotogravure sections of the metropolitan weekend papers.”³¹ This demonstrates that those who were in charge of recruitment saw print media, like newspapers, as integral to information output during the war. They were often the first source of information to report on what was happening overseas, and changes caused by the war on the home-front.

²⁹ “Propaganda: Second World War Approach,” *Library Archives and Canada Blog*, Library and Archives Canada, 30 July 2015, <https://thediscoverblog.com/2015/07/30/propaganda-second-world-war-approach/>.

³⁰ Ryan, “‘Don’t miss your great opportunity’: patriotism and propaganda in Second World War recruitment,” 259.

³¹ Pierson, 138. These were the sections of newspapers produced through the rotogravure printing system, used for longer print runs. Usually referred to the colour magazine of Sunday editions of the newspaper.

Even though the news reporting on the war was read equally by men and women, newspapers continued setting gendered standards for their authorship and content. Male journalists usually focused on “harder” topics of war and politics, and women journalists on “softer” topics, often involving homemaking and fashion. Women editors and journalists did have a degree of freedom about what they wrote, but they still reported to head male editors who had the final say over what was printed in the paper.³² The reporting of servicewomen’s activity provided an interesting middle ground, combining women’s topics and issues with the harder topic of war. Whether they were in the military or civilian settings, newspapers were largely responsible for creating a vision of war within reader’s minds.³³ Women who were part of the military, or involved in war work, had their positions glamorized in order to make their work as appealing as possible, to try and increase support for it and to draw in new recruits.³⁴ Women’s war labour also made the news more often than regular women’s labour had in the past, because it was seen as a novelty at the time.³⁵ This combination of newness and the need for increased support and recruitment led to spotlights placed upon Canadian servicewomen in many newspapers, reaching a large audience both enlisted and not.

Magazines were also widely read, especially women’s magazines, before and during the war. They acted as forms of mass entertainment, and their high circulation numbers during this time have identified them as “important carriers of cultural values.”³⁶

³² Tracy Moniz, “A Women’s Place is In the News,” *Journalism History* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2016): 83.

³³ Suryakanthie Chetty, “All the News that’s Fit to Print: The Print Media of the Second World War and its Portrayal of the Gendered and Racial Identities of the War’s Participants,” *South African Historical Journal* vol. 54 (2005): 30.

³⁴ Chetty, “All the News that’s Fit to Print,” 36.

³⁵ Moniz, “A Women’s Place is in the News,” 87.

³⁶ Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984), 13.

Some of the most popular magazines that circulated during this time were the *Canadian Home Journal*, *Maclean's*, and *Chatelaine*. *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Home Journal* alone reached an average readership of one and a half million each month.³⁷ Geared towards white, middle-class consumers, these magazines set themselves apart with their attempts to construct an easily recognizable Canadian identity in order to distinguish themselves within the market from American magazines.³⁸ Containing cheap fiction, such as short stories, they were desirable as relatively inexpensive forms of entertainment to supplement newspapers.³⁹ These magazines also made the effort to use Canadian authors to fill their pages, including short biographies that highlighted their nationality and area of residence within Canada.⁴⁰ By trying to use strictly Canadian content, these magazines chose to include narratives and advertisements that contributed to constructing a national identity.⁴¹ This was especially important during times of war, creating a more concrete sense of unity and community that helped to maintain morale. Due to the development of high readership, these magazines became prime spaces to publish propaganda or advertising relating to the war, and Canada's place within it. Recruitment advertising for the women's services was notably present in these magazines.

Recruitment advertising focused closely on targeting women's emotions in the efforts to try to convince them to enlist. After creating women's divisions within the three military branches, recruitment was the next key step that was taken. Once recruiting

³⁷ Michelle Denise Smith, "'Hello, Canada! It's fine to have you here': Canadian Nationhood, Women, and Popular Fiction during the Second World War," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 44, 1 (2009): 6.

³⁸ Michelle Smith, "Fiction and nation: the construction of Canadian identity in *Chatelaine* and *Canadian Home Journal* during the 1930s and 1940s," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 27, 1 (2014): 37.

³⁹ Smith, "Fiction and nation," 38.

⁴⁰ Smith, "Fiction and nation," 39.

⁴¹ Smith, "Fiction and nation," 38.

officers were trained, recruitment centers were set up all over Canada to enlist women. These centers acted as key information points where women could directly hear from women who had enlisted, find out more about military service, and join if they desired to. Against an onslaught of negative rumours about servicewomen, discussed more closely later in this chapter, recruitment centers were tasked with proving these rumors false as part of the effort to convince women to join. Not only did the services have to counter negative rumours, they were also in competition with each other. As part of the competition between branches, each service tried to come up with the best possible recruitment campaigns to attract the most desirable recruits. Recruitment stations were plastered with self-propaganda declaring service slogans. A CWAC recruiting station in Quebec had multiple images showing a servicewoman “shoulder-to-shoulder” with a soldier, and four separate cut-outs of another servicewoman next to the quote “La Canadienne La Plus Fiere! CWAC”, the English versions reading “The Proudest Girl in Canada.”⁴² Although important for drawing people into the recruitment stations, it was only one part of the overall plan to increase enlistment.

In order for officers to be chosen for recruitment duties they had to exhibit the “right” attitude. RCAF WD memorandums from December, 1942, demonstrated that WD recruiting officers chosen for these roles were often selected for their “enthusiasm and attitude towards the service” in order to appear more believable when addressing potential

⁴² “A CWAC Recruiting booth,” Corinne Kernan Sévigny, *The Memory Project*, Historica Canada (accessed November 7, 2018), <http://www.thememoryproject.com/stories/2506:corinne-kernan-sevigny/> and “Second World Wartime Photo Recruiting Women,” *Canadian Wartime Propaganda*, Manitoba Archives, Canadian Army Photograph Collection #162. Canadian War Museum (accessed November 7, 2018), https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/propaganda/photo11_e.shtml.

recruits.⁴³ This method was successful, as some women still remember how the recruitment officers “spoke very persuasively” about the opportunities the women’s services offered.⁴⁴ Those in charge of recruitment recognized this impression. Propaganda could be posted anywhere, such as newspapers or magazines, but the direct words of recruiting officers was perhaps more effective, giving personal testimony that enlisting was the right choice for young women and demonstrating to them how they were supposed to act.

Speeches by recruitment officers were used to convince eligible women, and their families, that in addition to offering new opportunities, serving was “not incompatible with femininity” and would not “make her less of a woman.”⁴⁵ One part of the job of recruitment officers was that they should quell the fears of servicewomen and their families about changes to their morality or femininity by joining. One way to do so was for recruitment officers and recruitment advertising to work together to convince women that joining the services was attractive.⁴⁶ Their argument was that women would not need to lose their femininity, remaining charming even while serving. Recruitment officers made enlisting sound ideal for women, one member of the Wrens stating that the recruiter in her area made the service sound “glamorous.”⁴⁷ This message was also reiterated in

⁴³ RCAF WD “Memorandum,” December 11, 1942, WD RG 24 vol. 3374 HA File 433-2-4-vol. 1, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁴ Mary Hawkins Buch, *Props on Her Sleeve: The Wartime Letters of a Canadian Airwoman*, Carolyn Gossage, ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 12.

⁴⁵ Pierson, 139. Eligible women were those above the age of 18, not exceeding 41, who met height, weight, weight, and education requirements. They also had to be “of good character with no record of conviction for any indictable offence.” Gossage, 53.

⁴⁶ Pierson, 139, Kallin, 30,

⁴⁷ Anne Kallin, *Proudly She Marched: Training Canada’s World War II Women in Waterloo County, Volume 2: Women’s Royal Canadian Naval Service* (Kitchener-Waterloo: Canadian Federation of University Women, 2007), 30.

recruitment advertising. A popular tri-service advertisement that ran in many major magazines read “My Girls are the real Glamour Girls,” with a mother looking on at a picture of her girls.⁴⁸ Advertisements like this one tried to persuade women that joining the services did not equal the loss of attractiveness. Some magazines, such as *National Home Monthly*, even chose a “Glamour Girl” of the year in 1943 to promote this idea.⁴⁹ Overall, the goal of promoting military life as stylish was to make more women excited to enlist.

Another way to make potential recruits excited about joining was by promoting the uniform that they would wear. Recruitment authorities assumed that the women who enlisted would care about their appearance, and that it would be a source of pride for them or make them excited to enlist. It was thought that creating an attractive uniform would attract more recruits.⁵⁰ For the CWAC this meant extensive research and design efforts went into creating the perfect uniform, with officials even going as far to hire a dress designer from Toronto to assist in its creation.⁵¹ Similarly concerned, a RCAF WD report reveals that they conducted surveys about their uniform. At one point they interviewed two hundred women about which items of the uniform should be changed, the final report urging officials to keep in mind enlistment goals, stating “that the above suggestion and information may be of some value.”⁵² The WRCNS also paid close attention to the creation of their uniform, realizing that they had to compete with the other

⁴⁸ “My Girls and the real Glamour Girls,” Public Archives of Canada, in Pierson, *They’re Still Women After All*, 143.

⁴⁹ Pierson, 142.

⁵⁰ Pierson, 139.

⁵¹ Pierson, 139.

⁵² “Recruiting- Women’s Division,” RCAF, March 17, 1943, Arnprior, Ont. RCAD WD Recruitment policy and promotion RG 24 vol. 3374 File no. 433-3-6 vol. 1. (2/46). Information and suggestions refer to the findings of the report.

two services. A broadcast from June 1943 reveals that they consulted a fashion expert throughout the process. Joan Carpenter, one of the superintendents of the WRCNS in charge of recruitment, stated that “She [the fashion expert] decided in favour of just about everything I had recommended.”⁵³ So much time and effort was put into designing the women’s military uniforms because they were seen as highly important tools that could be used to influence how women felt and maintain morale. The uniforms were markers of status, expressing servicewomen’s difference from other women.⁵⁴ In this way they were used to “turn women’s heads” and make them take notice of the service, hoping they would feel eagerness to enlist in order to get their hands on a uniform themselves.⁵⁵

Uniforms, advertising, and the media coverage focused on them were all produced to make women feel excited or eager to enlist. All three women’s services tried to send the message that their uniform was the best. In 1942, the CWAC distributed a brochure entitled *Women in Khaki* which claimed that “C.W.A.C. uniforms have been acknowledged by leading dress designers to be the smartest in the world.”⁵⁶ The RCAF WD published full page articles in many magazines that emphasised their uniforms as “Functional Fashion for 1943.”⁵⁷ They were also featured in shorter newspaper articles that declared the Air Force’s new uniforms to be “super” and “outstanding.”⁵⁸ There were numerous newspaper articles that covered the Wren’s uniform. *A Lethbridge Herald*

⁵³ WRCNS, “Navy Radio Broadcast,” June 14 and 16, 1943, MG 30 E 391, A. Sinclair files, Library and Archives Canada. Bracketed information added for clarity.

⁵⁴ Kathleen M. Ryan, “Uniform Matters: Fashion Recruitment in World War II Women’s Recruitment,” *The Journal of American Culture* 37, 4 (2014): 419.

⁵⁵ Pierson, 414, Kallin, 26.

⁵⁶ Pierson, 140.

⁵⁷ S/O F.M. Douglas, “Functional Fashion for 1943,” *Courtaulds Rayon Reporter*, 1943, RG 24 vol. 3374 File no. 433-3-6 vol. 1, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁸ “They’re ‘Super,’ Says Airwomen as They Try New Uniforms,” *Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1943, 9.

article detailing new improvements to the Wren's uniform promised that the new model would give "that 'dressed up' feeling at the end of a day's important work."⁵⁹ A tri-service advertisement that ran in both newspapers and magazines claimed that the uniforms were "smart" and told "the bigger story of women doing an important job."⁶⁰ Media coverage of the uniforms tried again and again to convince women that each service's uniform was the best, and by extension, women themselves could feel confident that they had chosen the best service. Furthermore, they told women that the confidence they would feel would also come from knowing that they were doing important work while in that uniform.

In addition to building confidence, the military believed that uniforms were of high importance to servicewomen and would encourage them to build up morale.⁶¹ In this way, the services had made the gendered assumption that women valued certain material things, like their uniforms and general appearance, to the extent that it could alter their performance.⁶² A WRCNS report revealed this, stating "a woman is still a woman and if she is not happy in her wearing apparel, not only her work, but the work of those around her will suffer."⁶³ Concessions were even made concerning certain items service women were allowed to wear while off-duty, to reinforce the idea that clothing choices were directly tied to women's morale. Numerous RCAF WD memorandums debated when, or if, servicewomen should be allowed to wear civilian clothes or silk stockings while on passes. It was recommended to allow servicewomen on at least 48 hour passes to wear

⁵⁹ "Tiddley Tricorne," *Lethbridge Herald*, November 12, 1943, 9.

⁶⁰ "My Girls are the real Glamour Girls," tri-service advertisement, *Lethbridge Herald*, August 31, 1943, 8.

⁶¹ Ryan, "Uniform Matters," 420, 427.

⁶² Tina Davidson, "A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty": Maintaining the Feminine Ideal in the Canadian Women's Army Corps," *Atlantis* 26, no. 1 (Fall/Winter 2001): 50-1.

⁶³ WRCNS, "Uniform," December 1945. MG 30 E391, Library and Archives Canada.

both civilian clothes and silk stockings because they were “small concessions to make, but a contribution to the happiness of the airwomen,” and “a contributing factor towards contentment in the Service.”⁶⁴ These examples reveal that the services were highly concerned with the creation and regulations surrounding the uniform because it was seen as directly influencing the morale of servicewomen.

In those uniforms, the main role of servicewomen was ultimately to support men in one of the three military services. Servicewomen were seen as vital in order to ‘liberate’ and ‘support’ men so that they could be freed to fight overseas, and they were portrayed by the media as doing this eagerly and enthusiastically.⁶⁵ Most famous, the phrase “We Serve that Men May Fly” was embraced by Canadian airwomen, which was in turn adapted by the CWAC to state that “We Serve that Men May Fight.”⁶⁶ A *Winnipeg Free Press* article from April, 1943, reinforced this reasoning for joining the Canadian Women’s Army Corps. It stated that, by joining the Army instead of conducting civilian work a woman would replace a “young, active, and useful man” for service overseas.⁶⁷ This would avoid competition with other forms of war work, where she would not be “replacing a fit man,” who would be better suited to that type of work.⁶⁸ There were many opportunities for women in civilian workplaces that were closer to home and paid similar wages, especially in the production field. This meant that the women’s services had to convince them that it was more beneficial for women to replace men who

⁶⁴ RCAF WD, “Memorandum. “April 22, 1943, 1011-2-16 AFBO 1092 11/11-6-43, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶⁵ Yesil, 109.

⁶⁶ Pierson, 160, citing Mary Ziegler, *We Serve That Men May Fly: The Story of Women’s Division Royal Canadian Air Force* (Hamilton, Ont.: R.C.A.F. (W.D.) Association, 1973), 66-67.

⁶⁷ “Shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!” *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 17, 1943, 21.

⁶⁸ “Shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!” 21.

were fit to directly fight overseas, rather than men who were unable to fight and were better used on the home front in civilian workplaces. Alongside having to compete with other branches for recruits, the services also recognized that they had to compete with civilian employers.

One way to convince women that it was more beneficial to the war effort to join the services than enter into civilian work was to target their emotions, to make them *feel* better about joining the services for one reason or another. An emotion often called on to try and increase recruitment was pride, explicitly arguing that women's service would bring them immense pride. In this context pride is defined in a virtuous light, referring to the feeling as wanting to "motivate individuals to acquire and demonstrate abilities, even in the face of difficulties" as well as engendering "perseverance on socially valued tasks."⁶⁹ Propaganda and the media wanted to convince women that enlisting would make them proud, with the expectation that that same pride would continue throughout their service, allowing them to persevere through any hardships service-life would present.

One advertisement for all three services in August, 1943, displayed a smiling woman with the caption "Why I am going to Enlist...", continuing that "I'll have the pride of knowing I'm doing my duty too."⁷⁰ In this case the focus was not put on one specific branch of the service, but offered a sense of patriotic pride to all women who served.⁷¹ Similarly, another advertisement from October of the same year had a woman front and centre pointing to the viewer in a pose reminiscent of the popular American

⁶⁹ Lisa A. Williams and David DeSteno, "Pride: Adaptive Social Emotion or Seventh Sin?" *Psychological Science* 20, no. 3 (2009): 284.

⁷⁰ "Why I am going to Enlist...", *Winnipeg Tribune*, Winnipeg, MB. (August 10, 1943)

⁷¹ Ryan, "Don't miss your great opportunity," 252.

Uncle Sam illustrations, with the caption reading “In the uniform of your country you’ll share that feeling of pride that comes with doing your utmost.”⁷² Yet another recruitment advertisement, from the Brandon, MB, *Daily Sun* in September of 1943 went a step further, combining pride gained through military service with the idea that civilian jobs were not as exciting or helpful as the work they could do as a servicewoman. The advertisement depicted a young woman watching a women’s military parade below her with the dialogue to the side stating “I’m doing just an ordinary kind of job I suppose, but those girls are doing something really important. No wonder they look so proud...”⁷³ The evocation of pride was the main goal of these types of recruitment advertisements. Often choosing to advertise together, the CWAC, RCAF WD, and WRCNS all chose to have one of the main messages directed to potential recruits be that by joining one of the military services they would be able to feel more pride in their work than would be available to them in civilian positions.

The promise of pride was not just extended to the potential recruit themselves; recruitment posters were also selling the idea that women who enlisted were going to make others around them proud by association. This was presuming that women desired to please their families by making them proud. They would be extending pride to their families in the same way it was extended to families of men in service. To this end, there were quite a few advertisements that were targeted towards parents. An additional reason to target parents was that during the war there were whispering campaigns circulating about servicewomen that spread harmful rumors, specifically attacking their virtue. These

⁷² “Do you honestly believe you’re doing your full share?” *Brandon Daily Sun*, Brandon, MB. (October 26, 1943),

⁷³ “Me Too!” *Brandon Daily Sun*, Brandon, MB. (September 28, 1943)

whispers were based on the perception that “women who wore a uniform and saluted were acting too masculine, so they must have broken with moral conventions as well” created the impression that women who joined the service became loose women who slept around.⁷⁴ These rumors worried parents, and advertising had to avert this worry by depicting servicewomen as wholesome and to instil the idea that it was a parent’s patriotic duty to encourage daughters to enlist. In doing so, parents could feel pride in their actions, knowing that their daughters were helping the war effort, along with maintaining their virtue.

Two CWAC recruitment advertisements exemplify how parents who let their daughters enlist were to feel extremely proud for doing so, because they were giving the most that they could to the war effort in the form of their child. One of the advertisements depicts young servicewomen disembarking from a train, greeting what the main headline deems “the proudest parents in Canada!”⁷⁵ Another advertisement shows a father smiling with his arm around his daughter in CWAC uniform, with the headline reading “I’m proud of you, daughter.”⁷⁶ While demonstrating that parents would feel pride in their daughters and contentment with their decision to let them enlist, these advertisements also told potential recruits that their parents would feel proud of them. Pride was shown as flowing in both directions. Recruitment advertising used pride as a way to try get women to enlist by also promising it to those around them who could influence their decision.

Another way of directly advertising to parents was to convince them that, in addition to being able to feel pride in letting their daughters enlist, they did not need to

⁷⁴Pierson, 174.

⁷⁵ “The Proudest Parents in Canada!” *Maclean’s Magazine*, October 1, 1944.

⁷⁶ “I’m Proud of You, Daughter,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, January 1, 1944.

feel anxiety about their service. A main goal of recruitment advertising was to try to counter the whispering campaigns that claimed servicewomen were deviant. Like the advertising for the WAVES in the United States, Canadian servicewomen were depicted in recruitment posters as wholesome and virtuous, embodying the 'girl next door' image.⁷⁷ Canadian recruitment advertising often contained images of women that parents felt they could be proud of because, aside from their contribution to war effort, their daughters would remain virtuous, avoiding bringing shame to the family and themselves. While there are cases of advertising depicting women with proud and stoic expressions, the majority of women shown are smiling, demonstrating their contentment with their choice to join one of the services. Similar to the WAVES advertisements, women are also depicted as "classically feminine," with perfectly curled hair, trim figures, full red lips, and limited make-up.⁷⁸ Their body language is depicted in a non-threatening manner, usually the women are shown as going about their daily business in uniform, such as one CWAC advertisement from December of 1944 that shows multiple CWACs in uniform going to church while serving overseas.⁷⁹ By showing servicewomen going to church, or innocently going about their duties, the services were directly trying to prove to parents, or anyone that had doubts about servicewomen's morality, that their virtue would not be harmed upon enlisting. The hope was that parents would feel less anxiety or fear about allowing their daughters to enlist, which would increase recruitment numbers.

⁷⁷ Ryan, 'Don't miss your great opportunity,' 255. WAVES refers to the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service in the United States Navy.

⁷⁸ Ryan, 'Don't miss your great opportunity,' 255.

⁷⁹ "Christmas over there!" Canadian Women's Army Corps advertisement. *Mclean's Magazine*, December 1, 1944.

If the promise of being able to feel proud of their role in the war was not enough to convince women to enlist, then military recruitment advertisements went further to elicit feelings of guilt in young women, hoping that this would spur them into action. While it was rarely actually stated that women should feel guilty for not doing their utmost to help the war effort, many of the recruitment ads did imply that if women did not enlist then they were letting down men at war, or at least not giving the full effort that they should. A general advertisement that stated “Brave Men Shall Not Die Because I Faltered” demonstrated that by entering previously male-dominated workspaces women were showing that they were not only putting themselves in service to the nation, but its soldiers as well.⁸⁰ In a similar style, an advertisement published in *Maclean’s* in 1943, read “we should have been in it long ago,” continuing that “We can’t leave it all to the men. This is our battle too.”⁸¹ This ad specifically called out women who had not joined yet, reminding them that the war effort was a collective effort and that they needed to be there to support Canada’s men. Another recruitment ad for the CWAC, published in *Maclean’s* in 1944, similarly called on women to not forget the men fighting, stating “the need for more women in the C.W.A.C. is more urgent than ever, in fact, it could not be greater – are you going to fail your brave brothers on the firing line?”⁸² These lines demonstrate that, as the call for more woman-power during the war rose, recruitment propaganda was not above appealing to women’s guilt in order to try to increase enlistment numbers. It did this by reminding women that every resource was needed for

⁸⁰ Michelle Dennis Smith, ““Hello, Canada! It’s fine to have you here”: Canadian Nationhood, Women and Popular Fiction during the Second World War,” *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* vol. 44, no. 1 (2009):11.

⁸¹ “Come on Girls!” *Maclean’s Magazine*, December 1, 1943.

⁸² “I’m Proud of You, Daughter,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, January 1, 1944.

the war effort, including their enlistment, and by not doing so they were not contributing to the collective effort and abandoning Canada's men in the process. Servicewomen were to be the support staff for men in the military, maintaining the traditional role of women as emotional supporters of men.⁸³ The strategy of trying to manipulate women's guilt into greater enlistment numbers was just one of the ways that recruitment advertisements pulled at women's emotions in order to try and get them to join the military.

If women chose to alleviate their guilt by joining, recruitment also promised that women over time would experience new-found confidence and empowerment in their positions with the service. This promise of confidence and empowerment was a key theme in much of the recruitment propaganda. In this context, confidence refers to women feeling certain about how to handle something, be it a larger life change or small task, which can entail "what a person desires or needs to do."⁸⁴ While confidence may not directly be considered as an emotion, it highly influences emotion, causing individuals to feel positively or have a positive outlook on their situation.⁸⁵ Combined with the motif of self-sacrifice, propaganda for the services depicted confident women who were empowered by their new roles in the military, comfortable performing the duties required of them.⁸⁶ This type of depiction was also beneficial to the military because having high confidence increases the odds that people will initiate and continue pursuing action because they believe that they can do what is required of them.⁸⁷ A RCAF WD recruitment advertisement shows three women working at various jobs, with the headline

⁸³ Pierson, 104 and 220.

⁸⁴ Alexander D. Stajkovic, "Development of a Core Confidence – Higher Order Construct," *Journal of Applied Psychology* 91, no. 6 (2006): 1209.

⁸⁵ Stajkovic, "Development of a Core Confidence – Higher Order Construct," 1209.

⁸⁶ Ryan, "Don't miss your great opportunity," 250.

⁸⁷ Stajkovic, "Development of a Core Confidence – Higher Order Construct," 1209.

“If Bill could only see me now!” referring to the beau of one of the girls who was also in the RCAF.⁸⁸ This clearly demonstrates that the girlfriend feels confident in her work, so much so that she feels Bill would be proud or impressed by her service. Another recruitment advertisement for the CWAC depicts a servicewoman marching alongside a soldier, the first line reading “Heads up...shoulders back...eyes forward...they march with purpose.”⁸⁹ The servicewoman is clearly portrayed in a confident position, marching without hesitation next to the soldier with a smile on her face. She seems confident in her duties, presenting the idea to potential recruits that they too would gain this confidence by enlisting without actually saying so. This demonstrates that recruitment advertisements did not always need to directly say that women would gain certain emotions if they joined up, sometimes they could present pictures or narratives that represented these feelings.

Along with promising women increased confidence by serving in the military, or a deliverance from the guilt of not enlisting, excitement was a key part of the emotional message of recruiting propaganda. This focus on excitement tells us that the services did not want to present service-life as just duty alone, they wanted to show women that it could also be rewarding and fun. In this way it was beneficial to sell to women the excitement that could come from joining up, such as that drawn from advanced educational training or new positions.⁹⁰ A CWAC advertisement stated in large, bold type “Exciting Positions Waiting – For You?”⁹¹ A similar advertisement in the same *Winnipeg*

⁸⁸ “Wartime Recruiting Poster If Bill Could Only See Me Now!” 1939-1945, 19890086-516, Canadian War Museum
https://www.warmuseum.ca/collections/artifact/1025676/?q=wartime+recruiting+poster&page_num=3&item_num=20&media_irn=5443866. Most likely “Bill” is the beau of the women depicted as closest to the viewer, smiling prominently.

⁸⁹ “Shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!” CWAC Recruitment, *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 17, 1943.

⁹⁰Russell, 68.

⁹¹ “Shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!” CWAC Recruitment, *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 17, 1943.

Free Press from 1943 proclaimed “shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!” and suggested women who enlisted could gain “exciting positions too, with new and interesting work to learn.”⁹² Almost every recruitment poster, film, or radio spot promoted this idea. A radio broadcast promoting the RCAF WD in October 1943 paid close attention to the increased job opportunities offered to women, with numerous real airwomen giving their testimonies at the end of the broadcast that focused on the important work they did.⁹³ This radio spot was part of the series *Comrades in Arms* which produced similar broadcasts for the CWAC and WRCNS in addition to the one produced for the RCAF WD. The theme that the services provided interesting and exciting work for women was carried through to film as well. The National Film Board created the propaganda series *Canada Carries On* to bolster morale during the war and one film, *Proudly She Marches*, demonstrated the exciting possibilities offered in all three of the women’s military services. The film followed the lives of three women as they each joined one of the three services, and special emphasis was put on the training they received and the jobs they acquired, showing them having fun while doing so.⁹⁴ It is clear through these forms of advertising that enlisting was portrayed as a gateway to new exciting job opportunities that were not available to civilians, further trying to convince women that they should join up.

A specific exciting opportunity for women that was prominently mentioned in recruitment advertising was the chance for overseas work. One recruitment advertisement

⁹² Winnipeg Free Press, April 17, 1943, <https://access-newspaperarchive-com.ezproxy.uleth.ca/ca/manitoba/winnipeg/winnipeg-free-press/1943/04-17/page-21/enlist-canadian-women%27s-army-corps?pci=2&ndt=by&py=1940&pey=1949&psb=relevance>.

⁹³ “The women who serve that men may fly,” *Comrades in Arms*, October 23, 1943, radio, CBC Digital Archives, <https://www.cbc.ca/archives/entry/women-of-wwii-the-women-who-serve-that-men-may-fly>.

⁹⁴ “Proudly She Marches,” National Film Board, directed by Jane Marsh, 1943, film, https://www.nfb.ca/film/proudly_she_marches/.

for the CWAC in 1943 read that, in addition to the “glorious” feeling of releasing men for service, “what’s more exciting is, there may be a chance for me to go overseas.”⁹⁵ Going overseas was an important aspect of what many women wanted when they enlisted, mainly due to the desire to be as close to the action as possible.⁹⁶ Excitement for this opportunity was encouraged in the media because it had the potential to raise recruitment. Newspaper spotlights, such as “Meet the CWAC” articles, interviewed current servicewomen, making sure that their jobs and experiences were portrayed in the best light. One “Meet the CWAC” spotlight from November, 1945, in the *Glenboro Western Prairie Gazette*, documented an account of overseas service by Cpl. H.M. Clark, who testified that her experience of being bombed as “quite exciting.”⁹⁷ It was not reported if she was scared at any time, or experienced doubts about her service due to the close proximity to danger. These types of feelings would not have been conducive to keeping up morale, instead excitement took center stage, reinforcing ideas from recruitment advertisements that enlisting added fun, interest, and the sense that they were doing something important to women’s lives.

In addition to the excitement of overseas work or new positions, other CWAC recruitment advertisements emphasised the chance to meet new people that came with enlisting. The emotional benefits of friendship and community were important draws to enlistment promoted by recruitment propaganda. One way to keep up morale when new recruits were enduring bouts of homesickness was to build sister-like friendships between those who enlisted. The friendships formed between servicewomen were crucial because

⁹⁵ “This is our Battle, Too,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, July 15, 1943.

⁹⁶ Gossage, 199.

⁹⁷ “Here a CWAC, There a CWAC: Meet a CWAC,” *Glenboro Western Prairie Gazette*, November 29, 1945.

they were able to help each other with “identity clarification, reminiscing, giving advice, socialization, and sharing leisure activities,” while navigating the new territory that was military life.⁹⁸ Recruitment propaganda never outwardly mentioned homesickness, because it would obviously be a deterrent to women joining, but it was alluded to by promising friendship. Promising that women would meet new people gave the impression that they would not be alone, and therefore not homesick. For example, a CWAC advertisement promised that new recruits would “find a grand group of girls, friendly and helpful.”⁹⁹ A RCAF WD advertisement similarly promised that “there’s fun and laughter and new faces...there’s good fellowship.”¹⁰⁰ Another advertisement for all three services stated that “I’ll meet girls from all over Canada” and that “the comradeship of the service is something that you can’t duplicate anywhere else.”¹⁰¹ By promising that new recruits would have the experience of meeting many new girls and be able to form close friendships, recruitment advertising effectively averted the fear of homesickness without having to even mention the word itself.

Canada had conceded that it needed women in the workforce, including the military, but it also needed to convince women and their friends and families that military life would be respectable. Most of the propaganda, newspapers, magazines, advertising, and other media felt that they had to remind those who enlisted that they would not lose

⁹⁸ Rosemary Blieszner and Rebecca G. Adams, “History of Friendship and Friendship Research,” in *Adult Friendship*, 28-39 (Newberry Park, CA: SAGE Publications, 1992), 31.

⁹⁹ “Come on, Girls!” Canadian Women’s Army Corp advertisement, *Maclean’s Magazine*, December 1, 1943.

¹⁰⁰ “A man used to do this job!” Royal Canadian Air Force Women’s Division, *Winnipeg Free Press*, January 26, 1943. 7.

¹⁰¹ “Why I am Going to Enlist...” Tri-service recruitment advertisement, *Lethbridge Herald*, August 10, 1943, 8.

their morality or femininity upon enlisting and would keep respectable reputations.¹⁰² Traditional gendered constructions had previously deemed respectable femininity as being incompatible with soldiering, tying the occupation to masculinity instead.¹⁰³ In doing so, there was real concern from women, their families, and friends that women who joined up abandoned their values in favour of licentiousness behaviour.¹⁰⁴ This concern led to A RCAF WD survey on the attitudes of family and friends towards enlistment which reported that 39% of mothers and 44% of fathers disapproved of their daughters joining the service.¹⁰⁵ Surveys of civilian girl friends and boy friends found comparable disapproval ratings, but surveys of boy friends and girl friends in the service found wildly different results, with the boys giving a 78% disapproval rating compared to just an 11% rating from the girls.¹⁰⁶ CWAC reports revealed similar results, noting that other servicewomen were the most vocal supporters of enlistment, encouraging civilian friends and family to join up.¹⁰⁷ These results of the RCAF report were reflected just a few months later when Air Force Headquarters attempted to enlist all of their previous civilian workers. Numerous letters were sent to recruitment centers from women declining this

¹⁰² This point has been well studied, specifically in relation to Canadian women by Ruth Pierson, *They're Still Women After All: The Second World War and Canadian Womanhood* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1986), Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)* (Toronto: The Dundurn Group, 2001), and American women by Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1984) and Doris Weatherford, *History of Women in America: American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, 1990), as well as many other scholars who documented how women entering male-dominated areas of the public sphere brought on moral panics over the maintenance of their femininity.

¹⁰³ Tina Davidson, "'A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty' Maintaining the Feminine Ideal in the Canadian Women's Army Corps," *Atlantis* 6, no. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2001): 45.

¹⁰⁴ Davidson, "A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty," 45.

¹⁰⁵ RCAF WD. "Suggestion Received from Recruits," May 28, 1942, 181.003 D 1469 2016-0053-3 146, Library and Archives Canada, 31.

¹⁰⁶ RCAF WD. "Suggestion Received from Recruits," 31.

¹⁰⁷ Pierson, 137, and 176, CWAC's were even at one point encouraged to write letters to their civilian female friends to try and persuade them to enlist.

offer, some of which stated reasons such as “disapproval of my parents” or “parents object to enlistment and “rumours going around about the “girls in blue,”¹⁰⁸ others referred to the “whispering campaigns” swirling that placed women who entered the service as “loose” women.¹⁰⁹ Regardless of the reason, women not enlisting due to the fears and influence of their family and friends persisted, which potentially brought down morale and decreased enlistment numbers.

Targeting the Emotions of Those Already in Service

Once women had been recruited into one of the services there was an effort to try to control their behaviour. All three of the women’s services held mandatory courses for new recruits including practical lectures that covered topics on the different ranks and functions of their service, and on “Etiquette and Bearing” that included “how to act and when.”¹¹⁰ After they enlisted, women would have felt little need to look at recruitment propaganda and would have received emotional cues from other places, such as training courses and military literature. These included inter-service magazines and newsletters, such as the WRCNS *Tiddley Times*, that connected servicewomen from bases all over Canada, giving cues for how they should be acting. For example, they portrayed servicewomen as enjoying military life, going through routines with “enthusiasm shining in their eyes.”¹¹¹ Newspapers were also helpful for providing cues about how servicewomen should be acting, with numerous articles published that describe them as happy and content with their service. These types of literature were watched over by the

¹⁰⁸ RCAF WD, Letters to the RCAF regarding female enlistment, August 1-3, 1942, RG 24 vol. 3374 HA File 433-2-4-vol. 1, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁰⁹ Pierson, 170-1.

¹¹⁰ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, February 26, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 24.

¹¹¹ “Protector,” *The Tiddley Times*, May-June 1945, MG 28 I 471 vol. 2, Library and Archives Canada, 23.

Wartime Information Board, whose goal was to convey messages of optimism about the war in the media, ensuring “high morale and patriotic fervour.”¹¹² This section will briefly cover how women’s emotions were influenced by internal propaganda and media after their enlistment through these methods.

High morale was generally agreed on by each fighting nation as required to win the war. It was seen as a way of managing people during war, moving them into action or “maximizing the collective capacity of a given group.”¹¹³ Morale was seen as the best impetus to mobilize people for the war effort, giving them a shared sense of goals to work towards.¹¹⁴ Although what exactly constitutes “morale” is not always clear, it was labeled as something “far more precious than any material possession.”¹¹⁵ This devotion to maintaining morale started at the top, with initial female officer training sessions that emphasised the importance of morale within their service. Manuals for officers in training included entire sections on morale, outlining it as “our mental attitude towards service life – our reaction to danger, discomfort, fatigue and boredom.”¹¹⁶ The loss of morale was, above all else, to be avoided. Officers were warned to take all grievances brought to them by servicewomen seriously and to remedy them as soon as possible.¹¹⁷ As it was put to RCAF WD officer trainees, “a discontented airwoman is contagious, and you don’t want

¹¹² “Democracy at War: Canadian Newspapers and the Second World War,” *Canadian War Museum*, accessed June 10, 2019, https://www.warmuseum.ca/cwm/exhibitions/newspapers/information_e.html.

¹¹³ Daniel Ussishkin, *Morale: A Modern British History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 4.

¹¹⁴ Ussishkin, *Morale*, 4, and Jody Perrun, *The Patriotic Consensus: Unity, Morale, and the Second World War in Winnipeg* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2014), .

¹¹⁵ CWAAF, “CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.’s Course,” 181.9009 D 847 Box 40 W-300013, Library and Archives Canada, 1.

¹¹⁶ “Royal Air Force Guide to Service, W.A.A.F. Officers,” MG30 E 498 vol. 1, 18. Willa Walker Fonds, Library and Archives Canada. This statement presumably refers to the ability to keep up high morale in the situations mentioned.

¹¹⁷ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 99.

epidemics of that kind.”¹¹⁸ This was clearly a message that had been carried through as the RCAF WD had developed, with earlier CWAAF officer training course manuals declaring that if complaints were suppressed “they will grow from mole-hills into mountains and the morale and discipline of the service will suffer.”¹¹⁹ Officers were given directions on how to set correct examples of ideal behaviour. In addition to being an “inspiration” to those under them, they were reminded that “Some will need encouragement, others restraint. Some will find service life difficult, others will make mistakes. Try to understand them all and help them. This will take time, thought and sympathy.”¹²⁰ These measures fought against potential discontent that could spread within servicewomen’s ranks, hurting the morale of the whole unit in the process. Training measures like these reveal that the morale of servicewomen was highly important to the operation of military units, and that regulations both outlined how to foster that feeling in servicewomen and maintain it in times of discontent.

Leadership training not only focused on the importance of the emotional morale of those beneath them, it also addressed officers’ own appropriate emotions, and groomed them to have the ‘right’ attitude while in service. A section in a CWAAF training manual outlined how officers should foster “section spirit,” stating that “all should feel pride in the section and have a real team spirit.”¹²¹ Pride was a term that was frequently connected to the women’s services during this time-period, often seen in recruitment propaganda and media coverage of servicewomen, but team spirit was something that was fostered

¹¹⁸ File 818.009, D4315, Department of National Defence, Directorate of History, Ottawa in *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, Carolyn Gossage (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 99.

¹¹⁹ “CWAAF Training Depot Officers and N.C.O.’s Course,” 3.

¹²⁰ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 100.

¹²¹ CWAAF, “C.W.A.A.F. Administration Course: Discipline – Lecture One. The Qualities of Leadership and Duties of Officers and N.C.O.’s,” 1.

more privately within the services. Officers had the power to do this by setting a good example, which was only possible if they were able to keep up high morale themselves. This emphasis on officers' own morale demonstrates that the military realized morale could not be produced through propaganda campaigns alone, the work of those already in the service to educate recruits about morale was just as important. Although he was talking about morale education in a broader sense, Charles I. Glicksberg, an American English teacher during the Second World War, saw teachers as the "generators of attitude" making the institution they represent "as strong as the personnel associated with it."¹²² In this way, officers had to set examples of correct emotional behaviour for maintaining high morale with the hope that they would increase the morale of those beneath them as well.

Aside from official training courses on morale, behaviour, and the efforts of officers, servicewomen also received behavioural cues from newspapers. Newspapers were trying to convey in their articles what emotional standards looked like for servicewomen.¹²³ Since the nineteenth century, "cheerfulness" had become a primary character trait of idealized women, so that they were expected to not only perform happiness, but to "genuinely *feel* happy" within their domestic spaces.¹²⁴ This expectation of women did not change as they moved into the workforce, and the women's services, in

¹²² Charles I. Glicksberg, "Morale Promotion in Wartime," *The Phi Delta Kappan* 25, 1 (September 1942): 16. (7-10,16).

¹²³ See here Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (October 1985), 813, which describes how all societies have ever-changing emotional standards, spoken and unspoken, that people within those societies prescribe to. During the Second World War, there were certain emotional standards that servicewomen were supposed to prescribe to that were reinforced in the media.

¹²⁴ Christina Kotchemidova, "From Good Cheer to "Drive-by Smiling": A Social History of Cheerfulness," *Journal of Social History* 39, no. 1 (Autumn 2005): 12.

the twentieth century. Newspaper editors worked with the women's services to continue promoting this emotional standard by printing articles that showed idealized versions of the everyday life of women who enlisted. These articles could range from coverage of new recruit training to Christmas preparations, but they all portrayed servicewomen as cheerful, happy, and content with their situations.

Since the 1920s, there had been an exponential growth in visual media, increasingly connecting products with pictures of people cheerfully using them, leading to increased sales.¹²⁵ This worked for images of servicewomen as well, placing them in the media looking content and cheerful to try to sell the service to potential recruits and remind current servicewomen how they should be acting. Headlines similar to "Wrens Enjoy Life in Newfoundland" were not uncommon. This particular headline was published by the *Globe and Mail* in August of 1944, and the article reported that the Wrens were "thrilled" by the voyage to Newfoundland, and were "enthusiastically greeted" by those who were already there.¹²⁶ Another newspaper reported that it "Finds Wrens 'Thoroughly Happy and Enjoying Work.'"¹²⁷ These types of headlines were not just restricted to the Wrens. A CWAC-centered headline provided an update on the first women to enlist in the service, stating that they "don't regret joining" and are "still happy."¹²⁸ Similarly happy in their roles, a headline concerning the RCAF WD read "Airwomen Enjoy Cosy, Merry Life."¹²⁹ The central theme of headlines such as these

¹²⁵ Kotchemidova, "From Good Cheer to "Drive-by Smiling,"" 18.

¹²⁶ "Wrens Enjoy Life in Newfoundland," *Globe and Mail* (August 4, 1944), 10.

¹²⁷ "Find's Wrens "Thoroughly Happy and Enjoying Work," *The Evening Times-Globe*, Saint John, N.B., February 17, 1945, MG 30 E 391, A. Sinclair files, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁸ "First to Enlist and Take Oath Don't Regret Joining CWAC: Lieut. Armstrong and Pte. Green Still Happy," *Globe and Mail* (August 27, 1942), 10.

¹²⁹ "Airwomen Enjoy Cosy, Merry Life," *Globe and Mail* (July 15, 1942), 9.

was that servicewomen were very content and happy with their situations. This provided a cue for other servicewomen that they should be content with their situations as well.

Newspapers from across the country reported on stories great and small concerning servicewomen. While recruitment and support for the services were prime reasons for displaying servicewomen's lives on their pages, the simple interest in the happenings of people serving from local communities was also important to readers. Many of these articles relied on emotional language, including words like "pride" or "loyal," to demonstrate to readers correct displays of emotion during war. Small spotlights on local women who were in service were also a way for a community to feel pride and contentment with their contribution to the war effort. Spotlights on servicewomen did more than reassure communities of just *their* contribution, it additionally reassured servicewomen of their contributions as well, and gave them guidelines for how they should be emotionally performing in public. An article in the *Globe and Mail*, dated January 1943, outlined the experiences of WRCNS Third Officer Nancy Pyper, highlighting how "impressively enthusiastic" she was about her work in the Navy.¹³⁰ Making it clear that she was highly excited to be doing her duty, the article went on to describe Third Officer Pyper as "very shy," "loyal," as a person, and speaking "affectionately," and "proudly" about her country and service.¹³¹ Articles like this example revealed to women, both in service and not, that the average servicewomen should be enthusiastic and proud about her work. Additionally, they should demonstrate an affection and loyalty for their country and have a demure and polite presence, shown

¹³⁰ "Grains on Prairies Remind Her of Sea," *Globe and Mail* (January 8, 1943), 9.

¹³¹ "Grains on the Prairies Remind Her of the Sea," 9.

through the description of Pyper's shy nature. By reporting servicewomen like this, newspapers gave other servicewomen "cues" on the emotions they should be feeling, and how they should be acting while in service.

To reinforce the importance of the women's services, an article from the *Halifax Mail*, March 1944, argued that the WRCNS should have a permanent place in the Navy. In doing so, the article interviewed Lieutenant Alexis Alvey, who is described similarly to Third Officer Pyper, the paper referring to Lieutenant Alvey's "enthusiasm" and "thoughtfulness," quoting her as "enjoying her work" alongside her defence that the women's service in the Navy should remain after the war was finished.¹³² These articles are just a few of many that highlighted different servicewomen and their roles, but they all have a common theme, that servicewomen were enthusiastic about their work. This communicated, to those in service, that their work was a highly enjoyable duty. Furthermore, it communicated that the correct emotions to feel and, perhaps more importantly, to portray, were excitement and enthusiasm for their contribution to the war effort. Articles demonstrating enthusiasm helped keep up morale by fostering excitement in those currently, and thinking of, serving within one of the women's military services.

Although media made sure to show the women in the service as content in their roles, the wartime life of a servicewoman also contained many new emotional challenges for women that they may not have experienced before enlisting. A negative emotional experience that many servicewomen endured was homesickness.¹³³ Homesickness was

¹³² "Believes Wrens Should Have Permanent Place," *Halifax Mail* (March 11, 1944) in the scrapbook of Rosemary Robb, Canadian War Museum, 52C 4 71.02 20100026-007.

¹³³ Nostalgia is the term used for homesickness, appearing in soldier's letters in the nineteenth century and the First World War. See Frances Clark, "So Lonesome I Could Die: Nostalgia and Debates over Emotional Control in the Civil War North," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 2 (Winter, 2007): 253-282.

the feeling servicewomen had when they were “longing for a particular home,” presumably including both the physical space and the people within it.¹³⁴ Many women who chose to join were quite young, and enlisting often took them away from their familial homes for the first time in their lives. This separation from their home could be very hard for some, which was a reality that the administration of all three services could not ignore. Worrying about homesickness damaging morale was not only reserved for servicewomen, it was part of a larger concern of the government about all service personnel, including men. Homesickness was seen as a “constant problem” among men in training centers, where it was considered a “weaking emotion [sic]”.¹³⁵ The government thought that homesickness could affect fighting spirit. In an effort to keep homesickness from damaging morale, initial measures were put into place to try to mitigate its effects even before enlistment. The main way that recruitment propaganda did this was to not mention homesickness at all, instead reinforcing exciting opportunities and the chance to meet new people. They could not hold off homesickness this way for long, as once servicewomen left home the services could no longer fully turn a blind eye to its presence.

Homesickness was especially hard for women within the first few months of their service as they left their homes, often travelling far away from them for the first time. The majority of training centers were located in Ontario or Quebec, such as the major centers in Waterloo County or Galt. Eventually the excitement of travelling away from home and

While the term *homesickness* is more commonly used in the Second World War, nostalgia references to memories of home are often mentioned in servicewomen’s letters and diaries, which may have been triggered by bouts of homesickness.

¹³⁴ Susan J. Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History,” *The Journal of American History* 94, 2 (September 2007): 469.

¹³⁵ Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again,” 494.

starting a new position in the military was bound to wear off. Being far from home, many new recruits became reliant on each other. In the four weeks of basic training that all recruits had to endure, a general change was quickly noted amongst them, largely due to creating strong friendships with the other women that warded off homesickness. The downside to these friendships was that they made departing after training very hard, leading to new layers of homesickness and loss that were somewhat soothed by the letters servicewomen wrote each other to keep in touch.¹³⁶ Initial team building in the recruitment stage, and the flow of letters once women were drafted to other stations, supported a tightly-knit service. Every woman knew at least someone who was serving at a different station. These bonds mimicked the bonds of family and friends that women had to leave behind. While there was not literature dedicated to these types of sources, inter-service newsletters or magazines helped women feel connected to other servicewomen they may have met and parted from when they were dispersed to separate stations after basic training.

One aim of inter-service magazines and newsletters, such as *The Tiddley Times* or *The Wise CWAC*, was to make servicewomen feel connected as part of a larger whole.¹³⁷ They also reinforced morale. Because they had been created by servicewomen, they more accurately reflected their views and experiences than civilian newspapers or magazines did.¹³⁸ Reading inter-service magazines and newsletters meant that servicewomen were

¹³⁶ Ruth Russell, *Proudly She Marched: Training Canada's World War II Women in Waterloo County Volume 1: Canadian Women's Army Corps* (Kitchener-Waterloo: Canadian Federation of University Women, 2006), 43.

¹³⁷ The RCAF WD must have also had a newsletter of sorts, but could not be found during research for this thesis.

¹³⁸ Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada's Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 228.

able to see what a friend's new base was up to, as well as alleviate boredom and demonstrate to servicewomen how they should be feeling about being part of the service. *The Wise CWAC* seemed to be tied to the training base at Kitchener, Ont., but the *The Tiddley Times* compiled short updates from WRCNS bases all over Canada. Aside from delivering updates on different units or bases, these publications included marriage announcements, new personnel postings, advice, short stories, and poems. The main emotions reinforced in these types of publications were happiness and contentment, both emphasized to keep up morale. One post from the Wrens serving in Newfoundland in *The Tiddley Times* captures this general spirit, stating in the first line "According to the paper, Wrens from "all over" seem to be enjoying life, but I am sure none of them any more than the Wrens here!"¹³⁹ Posts like these reinforced the idea that servicewomen were generally happy and content with their positions, keeping up high morale.

To demonstrate this contentment with service-life, *The Tiddley Times* was distinctive in that it made the effort to publish short editorials about different WRCNS bases inside and outside of Canada. This was an effective strategy to keep up morale because it created an imagined community that reinforced each other's emotions.¹⁴⁰ The same print technology that allowed for the mass production of propaganda also made it easier to exchange information between bases. This meant that Wrens who had never met each other before, or been to the places described in *Tiddley*, could feel a greater sense of connection to each other, and take emotional cues from each other. A Wren reading

¹³⁹ "Notes From Newfie," *The Tiddley Times: The W.R.C.N.S. Magazine*, Feb-Mar 1944, MG 28 I 471 vol. 2, Vancouver W.R.C.N.S. Association, Library and Archives Canada, 2.

¹⁴⁰ See here Benedict Anderson's "Imagined Communities," in *The Origins of Nationalism* (Blurb) 48-59, in which he theorized that the concept of nation is "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion," citing the initial idea of CF. Seton-Watson, page 49.

Tiddley might feel that she should be happy and content with her service if others were reported as being happy, excited, or content as well. For example, an update from the Wrens in London in the April – May, 1944 issue demonstrated this by stating “just how thrilled we are, how great a privilege we feel it is to be allowed to be part of London at this time.”¹⁴¹ This assertion of just how “thrilled” the Wrens were to be overseas tells other Wrens that they too should feel excited for the possibility of overseas work, and recognize it as the privilege it was. This is how magazines like *The Tiddley Times* reinforced certain emotions through creating an imagined community between its members.

The Wise CWAC was similar to *The Tiddley Times* in that it reinforced the collective positive experiences of servicewomen. While it only covered the daily activities of the large No. 3 Basic Training Camp in Kitchener, Ont., it still promoted the idea that there were many things to be excited or happy about for the CWAC’s stationed there. This included new postings for some women, or long-awaited spring weather. Even situations that were less than ideal, such as a quarantine whose reason was not listed, was reported positively, the women involved stating “all had a good time while in confinement...the Esprit de Corps was amazing...excitement was high.”¹⁴² There were also inspirational poems or short narratives printed that promoted healthy morale, such as

“C stands for Conquer, and we Must
W stands for Willingness to do our best,
A stands for Always on the watch
C stands for courage, which we all have,
Put them all together and they spell

¹⁴¹ “Hello Canada This Is London Calling,” *The Tiddley Times: The W.R.C.N.S. Magazine*, April-May, 1944, MG 28 I 471 vol. 2, Vancouver W.R.C.N.S. Association, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁴² *The Wise C.W.A.C.*, October-February, 1943, RG 24 vol. 16,627, Library and Archives Canada.

Canadian Women's Army Corps Evermore!"¹⁴³

This acrostic told servicewomen exactly how they should be feeling: enthusiastic, willing, and possessing the courage to do their duty. In this way, *The Wise C.W.A.C.* was able to present servicewomen with emotional cues for how they should be feeling, even in difficult situations, such as the quarantine.

These newsletters, aside from portraying servicewomen as happy and content overall, did allude to some more negative emotions, such as sadness or homesickness. When they did so, these feelings were only acknowledged briefly in comparison to the space given more positive emotions, and sometimes included suggestions for cures in order to perk servicewomen back up. For example, *The Wise CWAC* noted that some recruits were homesick, especially when in the hospital, and servicewomen were encouraged to write to them in order to lift back up their spirits.¹⁴⁴ *The Tiddley Times* also acknowledged hardships, specifically the feeling of doubt upon joining. *Tiddley* published a poem by Patricia Allen that highlighted the internal struggle of many women trying to decide if they should leave the duties they had in civilian life to join the WRCNS. In the end, Allen wrote that

“ Suddenly,
There comes to your attestation,
And the proudest oath you ever swore.
-You cross the gangway And your heart is light
For then
What you have feared is over And- you are a Wren!”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴³ *The Wise C.W.A.C.*, October-February, 1943, RG 24 vol. 16,627, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁴⁴ “Padre’s Corner,” *The Wise CWAC*, 1943, RG 24 vol. 16,627, Library and Archives Canada.

¹⁴⁵ Patricia Allen, “Shall I Join the Wrens?” *The Tiddley Times*, Feb-March, 1944, MG 28 I 471 Vol. 2, Library and Archives Canada, 16.

Troubles that may have been present in servicewomen's lives, such as their doubt about joining or homesickness, were briefly addressed in these newsletters and magazines, but not to the same degree that positive emotions were. At the same time, when they were addressed, negative emotions were always followed up with positive solutions, such as calling attention to the pride they should feel being in the service or the suggestion to send letters to each other to alleviate homesickness. In this way, servicewomen's newsletters and magazines were trying to keep up morale.

In the same theme of keeping up morale, grief is rarely mentioned in military documents, magazines, or newsletters. The closest that the military came to acknowledging grief, outside of notifying families, was through regulations outlining the concessions allowed to servicewomen when in private mourning. For example, the CWAC deemed it acceptable that "All ranks in private mourning when in uniform may wear a band of black crepe or broadcloth."¹⁴⁶ Grief was acknowledged, but there was no advice given on how it should be handled. In the case of servicewomen's deaths, which were notably few, funerals were held, which sometimes other servicewomen were given permission to attend. Official service photographers were also often hired for funerals, but this was more meant for families who could not attend rather than other servicewomen who may have also been mourning the loss of a friend.¹⁴⁷ This lack of acknowledgement could be because women, servicewomen included, were expected to have a stiff-upper-lip attitude towards loss. Expressing long-lasting grief was seen as inappropriate in a climate

¹⁴⁶ CWAC, "Regulations for the Canadian Women's Army Corps, Section One, Organization and Command," RG 24 vol. 12457, file 6, Library and Archives Canada, 39.

¹⁴⁷ Zeigler, *We Serve that Men May Fly*, 127.

of total war, especially for servicewomen who were seen as directly part of the military fighting force.¹⁴⁸

While the military may not have been helpful in providing advice on grief, popular media at the time certainly gave cues as to how women should be coping with this emotion. It can be assumed that much of the literature about grief during the war was similar to that in Britain because of Canada's close ties and shared training centers. The dominant theme of this literature was that stoicism was required of the grieving, and that outward expressions of grief were disruptive and selfish.¹⁴⁹ Britain's population was told that "their private grief and anguish should be subordinate to the collective war effort – that the outward maintenance of stoicism was one of the ways that they could help to win the war, maintaining morale, and thus making the sacrifices of death and grief worthwhile."¹⁵⁰ Stories with fictional characters dealing with grief by throwing themselves more earnestly into the war effort were common to support this idea.¹⁵¹ Fighting closely alongside Britain, Canada's views towards coping with grief were arguably similar. This would have been especially true for the servicewomen stationed overseas in Britain, as they would have been constantly surrounded by this message.

It is clear that certain emotions were paid closer attention by Canada's military than others. It was expected that servicewomen would adhere to the emotional standards set out for them in government propaganda and the media. This included demonstrating

¹⁴⁸ Lucy Noakes, "Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain," *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, 8, 1 (February 2015): 74-5.

¹⁴⁹ Noakes, 82-4.

¹⁵⁰ Noakes, 78.

¹⁵¹ Noakes, 78.

how they were meant to behave, reflecting social norms.¹⁵² Emphasising the maintenance of morale was paramount, and this was reinforced through the discipline of servicewomen's emotions by, for example, portraying them in the media as cheerful and content.¹⁵³ Happiness was portrayed as an individual responsibility and as a way to maximize personal potential.¹⁵⁴ While pride, contentment, and enjoyment in the service were emphasized, homesickness and grief were downplayed in the effort to keep morale high. Official military documents, magazines, and newsletters demonstrate how concerned the services were with influencing and regulating servicewomen's emotions in order to maintain high morale. They also demonstrate gaps, like the handling of grief, that were filled by popular media and literature. Though these mediums, servicewomen's emotions were manipulated, standardized, and regulated. It was made very clear from the beginning, through to the end of their discharge, what was emotionally expected from Canadian servicewomen during the Second World War.

¹⁵² Stearns and Stearns, "Emotionology," 825.

¹⁵³ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 88.

¹⁵⁴ Sarah Ahmed, "Introduction," in *The Promise of Happiness*, 1-21 (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

Chapter Two: Positive Emotions

Women knew that their day to day lives would change when they entered one of the women's services, and many hoped that they would get to experience the excitement and opportunities that had been promised in recruitment advertising. As recorded in their letters and diaries, sometimes the possibilities offered in recruitment advertising did come true, specifically new training, close friendships, and shipment overseas. This chapter argues that, while advertised events *did* influence servicewomen's emotions, they were not the only occurrences that elicited excitement, pride, humour, love, or contributed to high morale. The multiple small events that these servicewomen experienced everyday were just as important, if not more so, to bolstering and maintaining daily morale. This was especially realized through the personal connections the women made with those around them; the people that helped to foster positive emotions.

Positive emotions were those that made servicewomen feel "well and happy," or have a sense of satisfaction. These types of emotions could also motivate them to follow orders.¹ It is understandable why the services would want servicewomen to feel positively for a majority of the time because the combination of feeling content, satisfied, and inspired to follow rules, was important to keeping up morale. Furthermore, positive emotions are cumulative, with satisfaction in the present likely to lead them to similar feelings in the future.² While it is unclear if the military was fully aware of this effect, by looking at servicewomen's experiences that elicited excitement and happiness, pride,

¹ Robert C. Solomon and Lori D. Stone, "On "Positive" and "Negative" Emotions," *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, 4 (December 2002): 419, 423.

² Barbara L. Fredrickson and Thomas Joiner, "Positive Emotions Trigger Upward Spirals toward Emotional Well-Being," *Psychological Science* 13, no 2 (March 2002): 172.

humour, and love, it is possible to see how they were able to maintain their own morale during the war.

Excitement, Enjoyment, and General Happiness: Living within the Services

Some women recorded in their diaries and letters how excited they were when they enlisted and began basic training. After enlisting, new servicewomen were shipped off for basic training at depots located across the country. Most of them were located in central Canada, but there were a few in the west as well, such as in Vermillion, AB. Excitement upon joining is shown more clearly in the diaries than in the letters, specifically, in the diary of Molly Lamb Bobak.³ Lamb was not at first excited when she enlisted, specifically referring to her “misery” the first night she spent in the barracks in Vancouver.⁴ This attitude changed when she was first shipped off to Vermillion, AB., for her basic training, citing the train ride as a “thrill for travelling private [sic].”⁵ This excitement carries through in her description of her arrival in Vermillion, stating “the lights of Vermillion made the town an exciting mystery.”⁶ For Lamb the journey to her new life was exciting, but this level of enthusiasm is not evident in the other letters and diaries examined. This may be because the other collections analyzed start in the middle of, or after, initial basic training. This absence does not necessarily mean that women

³ From here on she will be referred to as Lamb, in citations and text, as per her maiden name used throughout her diary. Throughout these chapters, introductions to these women will state their full names, but subsequent mentions will refer to them by their maiden surnames only. This is because they would have been identified this way during the war. In the services it was a common practice between servicewomen to refer to each other by their last names rather than their first, as often demonstrated in their diaries and letters. For this reason, I will be referring to them by their maiden surnames as well.

⁴ Molly Lamb Bobak, “The Vermillion Address,” November 22, 1942, “W110278” *The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.*, R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵ Lamb, “Girl Celebrates First Night on Train,” December 8, 1942, “W110278” *The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.*, R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁶ Lamb “Training Begins With Bang!” December 8, 1942, “W110278” *The Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.*, R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

were not excited upon enlisting, in a rebuttal of recruitment narratives, but only that they may have not recorded that excitement until later. For example, Chapter One discussed how propaganda tried to convince women that opportunities offered through the service, such as advanced training, new positions, or overseas work, were reasons for excitement. Because what the propaganda promised did not occur until later on while serving, these women tended to save recording their excitement until then, possibly because they only recorded what they knew they should be feeling.

Excitement over uniforms is similarly missing from these servicewomen's diaries and letters. It was assumed by the services and the media that uniforms had a major effect on servicewomen's emotions and could either raise or lower their morale.⁷ Even though uniforms were frequently discussed in newspapers and magazines, and their creation debated thoroughly by officials within the services, they do not have a significance presence in letters or diaries.⁸ Talk about uniforms was not altogether absent, but their importance in these servicewomen's lives did not parallel the importance placed on them in the media. This challenges the military's perception that women's motivations could be largely influenced by their appearance. In a letter to her friend and mentor Marion Strang, Mary Hawkins Buch stated that "We have been issued with the old-type uniform, which

⁷ Tina Davidson, "'A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty' Maintaining the Feminine Ideal in the Canadian Women's Army Corps," *Atlantis* 6, no. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2001): 50. The allowance of silk stockings with the uniform was especially debated, with the services concluding that morale was higher when they were worn over the initially issued lisle stockings.

⁸ How uniforms should be worn or how they should look was highly debated in the media, for examples see Melissa A. McEuen, *Making War, Making Women: Femininity and Duty on the American Home Front, 1941-1945* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2011), 133-147, Martha L. Hall, Belinda T. Orzada, and Dilia Lopez-Gydosh, "American Women's Wartime Dress: Sociocultural Ambiguity Regarding Women's Roles During World War II," *The Journal of American Culture* 38, no. 3 (September 2015): 238-9, Tina Davidson, "'A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty,'" 47-49, stating that "the military media encouraged servicewomen to wear the uniform correctly and with pride."

makes me happy. We may get a new hat and tunic later in the Spring.”⁹ While this passage reveals that Hawkins did care about being issued her uniform, it is only a small section of a longer letter and its importance is dwarfed by other events. Some of the other women also noted receiving or updating their uniform, but, again, they did not write about doing so with the same level of interest placed on uniforms in the media. For example, in her personal diary, Joyce Burgess Erickson only noted that it was “my first day in uniform” at the beginning of her training, without elaborating if she liked it or not, or how it made her feel.¹⁰

The state of living quarters was commented on more frequently than uniforms, which indicates that they had a greater effect on these women’s morale. While officials had focused on what they assumed would be key motivating factors for servicewomen, such as uniforms, they overlooked the importance of other areas, such as living conditions, that seemed to affect women’s morale in a more significant way. Whether they were stationed at home or overseas, it was common for servicewomen to be housed in dormitory-like situations. This meant sharing living quarters with several women. This was new for most of them. Other aspects of their living conditions were also less than ideal, especially since the camps had been hastily built. Complaints of faulty coal stoves, leaks, and lack of bathroom privacy reveal the difficult living adjustments servicewomen had to make.¹¹ Privacy was especially coveted, sometimes meaning more to woman than

⁹ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, February 23, 1943, in *Props on Her Sleeve: The Wartime Letters of a Canadian Airwoman*, Carolyn Gossage, ed. (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1997), 22.

¹⁰ Joyce Burgess, July 19, 1943, diary, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

¹¹ Carolyn Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots: Canadian Women at War (1939-1945)* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2001), 132.

having modern quarters.¹² Better conditions meant more content servicewomen, and higher morale. Servicewomen certainly did get excited over nicer living quarters. For example, when stationed overseas in London. Robson commented in a letter home that her new housing situation had a bathroom where “there is always hot water which is wonderful.”¹³ Overseas living situations tended to be similar to those in Canada, with the only change being that servicewomen operating on the European mainland moved around more often. After the Germans were pushed back by the Allies out of France and Belgium, beginning in 1944, contingents of the CWAC were sent into north-west Europe to assist headquarter units, mainly by performing clerical duties.¹⁴ Due to the unsteadiness of the front lines, the CWACs were forced to find new living quarters more frequently. When Robson was moved to Belgium she noted in a letter that “Our living conditions here are the best.”¹⁵ There are many more times that she notes how nice the places she is staying are, demonstrating her happiness with the situation. The state of their quarters was mentioned by other servicewomen as well. Catherine K. Drinkwater wrote to her parents after arriving in London that she had “very comfortable quarters”.¹⁶ Even the chance to move to better living quarters was a cause for excitement, with Mary Hawkins writing that she could “hardly wait” to move to a nicer room with some friend of hers, noting that

¹² Bettie J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps, 1945-1978* (Washington D.C.: Center of Military History United States Army, 2000), 196. Even though this study starts its analysis at the end of the Second World War, the conditions that servicewomen lived in would have been similar in nature.

¹³ Robson, letter to her parents, February 28, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.* (Toronto: KAKABEKA Publishing Co. Ltd., 1975), 91.

¹⁴ Barbara Dundas and Dr. Serge Durflinger, “The Canadian Women’s Army Corps, 1941-1946, Dispatches: Backgrounders in Canadian Military History,” Canadian War Museum, accessed June 1, 2019, <https://www.warmuseum.ca/learn/dispatches/the-canadian-womens-army-corps-1941-1946/#tabs>.

¹⁵ Robson, letter to her parents, January 6, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 142.

¹⁶ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to parents August 20, 1943, *Letters to Edgewood Farm From a Canadian Girl in World War II*, Bonnie Rourke, ed. (Canada: Bunker to Bunker Publishing, 2002), 66.

“even a month of hot water, privacy, freedom, what-have-you, sounds like bliss.”¹⁷ Some of the areas servicewomen overseas would have stayed in likely had damage from enemy bombing campaigns, but simple things like hot water and increased privacy helped to create a sense of comfort. It can be surmised from these letters that comfortable living quarters boosted women’s spirits, making their time in service more enjoyable and helping to maintain their morale.

Nice living quarters were not the only thing that could keep up morale, letters from home also proved to be very effective. Servicewomen experienced varying degrees of stress while in service, and letters from home were vital in maintaining their morale and resolve.¹⁸ Frequent letters from home also allowed servicewomen to feel at ease in their roles, knowing that their families supported their decision to enlist and had not forgotten them.¹⁹ They were also essential for warding off homesickness. Thrown into new military-life routines, or sometimes shipped overseas to strange places, letters provided a link to home for servicewomen. The CWAC editorial *Madame in Khaki* stressed the importance of letter writing, stating “When you are away from home, shut off from normal life, living an organized and communal existence in barracks, letters take on a new meaning. Mail is guaranteed to give you a boost. It is the touchstone linking you with family and friends who are far away.”²⁰ Women certainly showed their appreciation for letters sent, and often asked or wished for more. Joyce Burgess wrote in her diary

¹⁷ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, July 30, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 48.

¹⁸ Judy Barrette Lutoff and David C. Smith, ““Will He Get My Letter?” Popular Portrayals of Mail and Morale during World War II,” *Journal of Popular Culture* 23, 4 (Spring 1990), 21.

¹⁹ Mary Zeigler, *We Serve that Men May Fly: The Story of the Women’s Division Royal Canadian Air Force* (Hamilton, Ont.: The R.C.A.F. (W.D.) Association, 1973), 119.

²⁰ “Mademoiselle in Khaki,” in *Proudly She Marched: Training Canada’s World War II Women in Waterloo County, Volume 1: Canadian Women’s Army Corps*, Ruth Russell (Kitchener-Waterloo: Canadian Federation of University Women, 2006), 100.

soon after enlisting and being sent off for basic training, “Gee, I wish I’d get more letters, It’s awfully lonesome without letters from home.”²¹ While overseas, Catherine Drinkwater also demonstrated her desire for more letters many times when writing her parents, telling them “Don’t forget to write often,” and “keep writing.”²² When letters did come in, Drinkwater commented on how it was exciting to receive letters faster than usual. In one letter she wrote “It’s really grand getting letters in the same week they are written. It really makes me feel I’m not so far from home after all.”²³ This sentiment was also felt by Molly Lamb, as expressed in her diary “it makes life worth living to get all the lovely mail I receive! Therefore...may I thank my mother and my friends...for the fine and frequent letters.”²⁴ Drinkwater also outlined the wide effect letters could have on morale, reaching most servicewomen, stating the when they were told the mail had come in “Everyone makes a dive for the post office and the atmosphere all at once becomes bright.”²⁵ Letters from home clearly improved the mood of servicewomen, keeping homesickness at bay as well as boosting their spirits and morale.

Drinkwater and Lamb were not the only servicewoman to get excited over letters from home. While much happiness stemmed from receiving letters from their parents and friends, letters from love interests could be just as exciting and beneficial to morale. Joyce Burgess often noted in her diary that she wished a particular beau from home, Wil, would write more often. When Wil did choose to write, she was absolutely thrilled. After being

²¹ Joyce Burgess, July 20, 1943, diary, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

²² Drinkwater, letter to parents, July 17, 1943 and August 14, 1943, respectively, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 53 and 66.

²³ Drinkwater, letter to parents November 28, 1943, *Letters of Edgewood Farm*, 78.

²⁴ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Mail is a Great Comfort to Guppie,” December 1942, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M. R5336-20-1-E*, Library and Archives Canada.

²⁵ Drinkwater, letter parents August 14, 1943, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 66.

shipped near Ottawa for training she finally received her first letter from Wil on July 21, 1943; in her diary she noted “Gee, it was wonderful...I’m so happy now I can’t even see straight.”²⁶ Similar episodes happened in the next few months. On August 11 she wrote “Received another letter form Wil, plus a picture. I’m happy now because he still loves me,” and on September 15, “Had another letter from Wil, and one from home. Gee, I was pleased.”²⁷ In addition to letters from home, letters from current suitors brought servicewomen joy and the affirmation that their loved ones were still thinking about them while they were not there.

Finding Ways to “Blow off Steam”: Enjoyment during Time Off

Time off was another way to avoid homesickness and add excitement and enjoyment to servicewomen’s lives. Servicewomen could find the routine of military life hard at times, with demanding or tedious work and irregular hours to endure.²⁸ When they were allowed time off they were quite excited. Hawkins wrote to Strang about how excited she was for her thirty-six hour break, stating “It sounds so wonderful to have three whole days!” This time off was made possible by combining her already scheduled time off for the current week with the next in order to get some much-needed relaxation.²⁹ A few months earlier Hawkins had also mentioned her enjoyment about having time off, writing Strang, “Yesterday was our day off. Happy occasion!” and that due to this she

²⁶ Joyce Burgess, personal diary, July 21, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

²⁷ Joyce Burgess, personal diary, August 11, 1943 and September 15, 1943, respectively, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

²⁸ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 248.

²⁹ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, June 15, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 44. A “thirty-six” referred to thirty-six hours off duty, when servicewomen had free time to spend relaxing or exploring their surroundings.

was “in the pink of condition, having just about twenty hours of nothing but sleep and then four meals in the space of almost as many hours.”³⁰ While in London, Kathleen Robson also wrote to her parents about how happy she was to have time off, noting “Tomorrow is Good Friday and, moreover, what is more wonderful, I have the whole day off.”³¹ Sometimes, it was enough just to escape for a few hours, to relieve themselves of the rigid structure of military life. Movies were often played in training centres to give servicewomen small breaks. Eve Milne recorded in her basic training log that “these picture shows are splendid for getting one away from the daily routine without having to go to town.”³² This off-duty time allowed them to let off steam, relax, or simply be themselves outside of the entity that was the services.³³

Many servicewomen took this time off to enjoy and explore their surroundings, either in Canada or abroad. Recruitment advertising had promised this opportunity, to see new people and explore new places. Servicewomen found this promise fulfilled, often taking off-duty time to mean that they should use every minute to create lasting memories.³⁴ Most of the time servicewomen were too far away to visit their families on the meager time off they were allowed, so they picked places closer to them that they wanted to see. For those stationed in southern Ontario or Quebec this might mean taking a jaunt into the United States. Molly Lamb went twice to New York, describing the first time in her diary as an “amazing trip,” noting as she conversed with “reporters” that

³⁰ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, May 11, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 38.

³¹ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, April 22, 1943, *Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 47.

³² Eve Milne, personal log, August 25, 1943, MG28 I 471 V. 3, Library and Archives Canada.

³³ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 247-8. W. Hugh Conrad, *Athene*, 291.

³⁴ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 248.

“triumph shone in her eyes.”³⁵ Being very interested in art, Lamb made sure to mention in detail her experience visiting the Art Students’ League building. She wrote that while inside she “became very excited” to be in the place where many artists she liked and respected had taught.³⁶

The servicewomen who had been stationed overseas in Great Britain and on the European continent also took advantage of time off to explore. For example, Robson was stationed in London, England, in 1942, and explored what Great Britain had to offer on her days off. After a trip to Scotland while on leave, Robson noted in a letter home to her parents that she was “full of enthusiasm”.³⁷ Also overseas, Drinkwater’s letters home described many of the trips she took while on leave, notably to Scotland and Paris, visiting the latter after it was liberated in 1944. In one letter she conveyed her delight with Paris, writing “Well! Paris was far beyond my most hopeful expectations.”³⁸ If they could not go home to visit their families, then servicewomen found enjoyment in exploring their surroundings while on leave, exactly as promised by recruitment advertising, allowing this time off to regenerate their spirits.

While on leave, much of their social time was devoted to pure fun.³⁹ If they were not resting at their quarters, or on exploratory trips to other cities or areas of the country, servicewomen enjoyed their time off seeing shows, attending dances, or visiting with friends. These off-duty experiences could bring fun and joy into servicewomen’s lives,

³⁵ Molly Lamb Bobak, “New York by Thumb. (The Account of the Overland Journey of CPL. Jones and PTE. Lamb),” February 24 – 28, 1944, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada, 1.

³⁶ Molly Lamb Bobak, “New York by Thumb,” 13.

³⁷ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, June 30, 1943, *Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 54.

³⁸ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, March 19, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 167.

³⁹ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 100.

offering them a break from the hardships of their jobs and the war.⁴⁰ Rosemary Robb recorded in her day-to-day log many instances when she and her friend, Alexis, went into Halifax to see films. At one point Robb and her friend even stayed overnight at the Nova Scotian hotel, describing their time as a “perfect evening.”⁴¹ On a similar brief trip into Ottawa with friends, Joyce Burgess recorded in her diary that they toured the Parliament buildings and saw an Air Force show that was “super.” At the end of this entry she showed that she was obviously happy with the outing, writing that “We sure had fun. I never laughed so much in my life.”⁴² Drinkwater was also having a good time overseas in London, using brief trips to explore the city more closely. At one point she and some friends went sightseeing and her enjoyment is obvious in her letter home, which records that she was “amazed” at the wax figures at Madame Tussaud’s Wax Works, and referred to the Royal Albert Hall as “magnificent.”⁴³ Robson chose to spend much of her off-duty time with new friends she met in London who were not in the service. Shirley was one friend mentioned many times by Robson in her letters, who recorded the time they spent together on Shirley’s boat. These outings were fun and relaxing for Robson, who wrote home how she had “a wonderful weekend at Shirley’s on her boat.”⁴⁴ When they could not go home, or did not have enough time for larger exploratory trips, servicewomen enjoyed taking in their surroundings or relaxing with friends. By doing this they were able to get away from work and fully enjoy themselves with their friends. This was

⁴⁰ Amanda Mason, “Popular Pastimes and Entertainment in the Second World War,” *Imperial War Museum*, January 10, 2018, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/popular-pastimes-and-entertainment-in-the-second-world-war>.

⁴¹ Rosemary Robb, personal log, August 13, 1943, 52C 4 71.02 20100026-007, Canadian War Museum.

⁴² Joyce Burgess, personal diary, September 19, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

⁴³ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, August 11, 1943, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 62-3. Underlining included in original quote.

⁴⁴ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 3, 1943, *Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 49.

important in keeping up with morale because it gave women the chance to step back from the monotony of service-life and briefly enjoy new experiences.

“Work for Joyous Girl!”: On-Duty in the Service

Leisure time was beneficial in breaking up work that servicewomen found repetitive or boring, but a more efficient way to boost morale was to give women work that they enjoyed. Sometimes this meant having to be transferred or obtain a promotion. The possibility of this gave servicewomen reason to be excited and made them feel more valued. As seen in the first chapter, recruitment advertising had told women that they would have exciting jobs and new opportunities, and promotions or transfers could fulfill that promise. Getting promoted or receiving a special recognition was seen as an honour, something that was recorded in diaries or had girls writing home to their parents with pride.⁴⁵ Burgess noted her excitement in her diary when she was chosen for a RCAF WD Precision Squad, writing that “I was chosen with 32 others out of 250...What an honour!”⁴⁶ Sometimes other motivations were part of their excitement. Servicewomen also became excited about being moved to positions they enjoyed more. Lamb’s main goal when enlisting was to become a war artist. Any job that allowed her to express herself as an artist was attractive. After working in the canteen in Hamilton, Ont., for many months, Lamb was posted to Toronto to paint scene sets for the Canadian Army Show. In her diary, Lamb depicts “reporters” walking in to find a “frenzied girl who was

⁴⁵ Sarah Hogenbirk, “Women Inside the Canadian Military, 1938-1966,” (PhD diss. Carleton University, 2017), 403. Sending home word of their promotions, or saving evidence of their achievements in scrapbooks, demonstrated that women wished to be acknowledged as female military experts to some degree, taking pride in their achievements.

⁴⁶ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, July 23, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

dancing up and down with joy.”⁴⁷ Robson also found herself excited about a new job while overseas. Extremely bored with her current job typing technical details about chemical warfare, Robson went directly to the Colonel in charge and made an argument that she was being “wasted” in her current position. She was then able to make a persuasive case for herself that succeeded in getting her posted to the Medical Branch, writing home that “already the outlook is brighter. Have lost two months of promotion but consider it worth it.”⁴⁸ Robson demonstrated that for her a loss of promotion was a worthy sacrifice if it meant a transfer to work she enjoyed and was excited about. Doing work that servicewomen actually liked made women feel like they were doing something worthwhile, and kept up morale because they were enjoying their jobs more. Being allowed to do exciting work that they enjoyed also fulfilled the promises of recruitment advertising. If servicewomen were stuck in jobs they felt were boring or a “dead end” they may have started to question their decision to enlist, ultimately losing faith in the service itself or harming their morale. Attaining a job they enjoyed reinforced the idea that they had made the right choice and were active contributors to helping win the war.

The most exciting location for servicewomen to work was overseas. But, while this posting was highly desired, it was not available to most women. It is estimated that of the women who enlisted, one in nine was sent overseas.⁴⁹ In the Canadian Women’s Army Corps alone, there were over 1900 servicewomen of all ranks stationed in Great

⁴⁷ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Suicide Plot Foiled in Time!” February 1944, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁸ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, January 3, 1943, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 32.

⁴⁹ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 199.

Britain and Europe by 1945.⁵⁰ Most of the servicewomen sent overseas found themselves in Great Britain, but some were moved into France, Belgium, and Italy to perform administrative duties once the Axis forces were pushed back.⁵¹ This overseas war service was not always as dramatic as hoped. One reason for posting them to Europe was that servicewomen were desperately needed to fill understaffed areas, for example the Canadian Military Headquarters in London had a dire shortage of laundresses.⁵² Even if the work was not necessarily glamorous, overseas travel was coveted by servicewomen, often advertised heavily in recruitment propaganda, and the possibility of going to Europe was the second most cited reason for enlisting after patriotism.⁵³ This was because it offered a chance at excitement and adventure not generally offered to civilian women.⁵⁴ The fact that overseas postings meant that servicewomen's lives would be put in greater danger did not seem to be a deterrent. The overwhelming desire to be part of the action, or at least closer to it, outweighed any fears or other doubts servicewomen had.⁵⁵

Most of the servicewomen examined in this thesis were given the opportunity to serve overseas, including Catherine K. Drinkwater, Kathleen Robson Roe, Mary Hawkins Buch, and eventually, Molly Lamb Bobak, but initial excitement is recorded more frequently in their diaries than their letters. Talking to "reporters" after finding out she was being sent overseas, Lamb stated in her diary that "you can quote me as saying I am

⁵⁰ Colonel C.P. Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War. Volume I: Six Years of War, The Army in Canada, Britain, and the Pacific* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer and Controller of Stationary, 1955), 210.

⁵¹ Stacey, *Official History of the Canadian Army in the Second World War*, 211.

⁵² Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 200.

⁵³ Pierson, "They're Still Women After All," 111.

⁵⁴ Pierson, "They're Still Women After All," 111, Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 72.

⁵⁵ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 199.

happy about everything – it’s all wonderful.”⁵⁶ Unfortunately, letters do not capture the initial excitement of women getting posted overseas because they were usually not allowed to tell their loved ones they were leaving until after, lest information about ship movements be leaked to the enemy. This was hard on some women. Drinkwater wrote a letter to her parents to be posted a week after her departure, stating in it “At long last, King Geordie has requested my presence overseas to fight for our country.”⁵⁷ This shows her pride in going, a chance to finally fight for her country in a way she felt she had not been doing in Canada. Robson tried to hint to her parents that she would be leaving soon, in a letter home writing “In case these letters suddenly stop, you will know what has happened.”⁵⁸ Indeed, just a short two weeks later she would find herself on a ship to England. These instances demonstrate one of the issues that researchers need to be alert to when using wartime letters to try to understand women’s emotional responses to the war. Sometimes servicewomen’s communication of their excitement would have to be delayed in their letters home because they were not allowed to disclose plans or location at the time for fear of information leaking to the enemy.

Even though these servicewomen did not get to initially share their excitement with loved ones through their letters, they still recorded being happy and excited about being overseas once they were allowed to reveal their location. After receiving a new draft of the CWAC in England, Robson wrote home that “They are quite excited like we were at first.”⁵⁹ Drinkwater also expressed to her parents how London amused and

⁵⁶ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Lamb’s Fate Revealed!” May 24, 1945, “W110278” the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁷ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, July 17, 1943, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 53. Here the name “King Geordie” refers to King George VI of Britain.

⁵⁸ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, October 16, 1942, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 10.

⁵⁹ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, April 5, 1943, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 44.

amazed her in her first few letters home once across the Atlantic.⁶⁰ In a similar manner, Hawkins wrote Marion Strang a massive letter detailing her first few days once actually there. Like Drinkwater's letter, she meticulously details her exploration of London, even noting her "first exciting ride on a double-decker bus – and I do mean exciting!"⁶¹ The first letters home were generally longer, as servicewomen tried to fit in as much as they could about their new home, and their amazement about it.

The War Ends, Mixed Feelings Remain

Eventually the war did come to an end, which meant that servicewomen found themselves returning home. This was welcomed by some women, especially those stationed overseas. Despite such positive reactions to being posted there, as the novelty of being away from home wore off servicewomen were equally eager to return home after the war ended as they had been to leave it. Before they could express their excitement in returning, their letters first express their mixed feelings at the war being over. After all, it had become an all-consuming part of their lives. Even though May 8, 1945, was the official end of the war on the European front, the war in the Pacific was still ongoing. Demobilization was also a slow process and for many servicewomen did not return home until at least the fall of 1945.⁶² Robson wrote home on May 7, "Well the war is over...and everyone is wondering: What next?"⁶³ Initial mixed feelings were not uncommon, Drinkwater sent similar messages home, stating in one letter "I still can't

⁶⁰ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to her parents, August 6 and 11, 1943, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 62-3.

⁶¹ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, December 5, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 69. The "exciting" ride on the bus was mainly due to the sudden switch of driving on the other side of the road and the fast pace of traffic.

⁶² Kallin, 11.

⁶³ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 7, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 154.

believe the war is over!”, and another “I don’t know what my plans will be when I get back. We seem so far away.”⁶⁴ There were some initial fears about returning home and going back into civilian life, but it was soon overshadowed by end-of-the-war celebrations causing excitement and merriment all around servicewomen, distracting them from their doubts.⁶⁵

It was hard not to be pulled into the celebrations for Victory in Europe Day, also known as VE Day. At first the shock of the war ending seemed to have affected some servicewomen, Robson writing that “There is no excitement, everyone is a little sad,” but efforts to change this feeling were immediately put in place, as she noted “To cheer us up they have announced we are to have an official dance here the day after VE-Day.”⁶⁶ This sadness was mostly due to the loss of the opportunities the services provided them, such as training, travel, or friendships, but this loss was soon somewhat forgotten in the midst of VE Day celebrations. Drinkwater certainly partook of the VE Day festivities, obtaining a two day leave for London. She partied both in London and at her old camp, writing home that “Everyone is so happy...Everyone has gone wild, running here, there and everywhere. Oh! Oh! Oh! It’s a lovely war.”⁶⁷ This was a common theme in the press as well, recording the elation felt by the city of London as it went “wild.”⁶⁸

⁶⁴ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to parents, May 13, 1945, and June 1, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 194, 204.

⁶⁵ For initial fears, a former Wren reported that “a lot of people were feeling really lost when they got out, because they weren’t used to thinking for themselves.” Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 275.

⁶⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 7, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 154.

⁶⁷ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, May 13, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 194.

⁶⁸ Shanti Sumartojo, “‘Dazzling Relief’: floodlighting and national affective atmospheres on VE Day 1945,” *Journal of Historical Geography* 45 (2014): 66.

The general sense of excitement and happiness due to the war being over was hard to miss. A consequence of VE Day that the servicewomen overseas mentioned as adding to this atmosphere was the return of lights. During the war many European cities had endured blackouts, when light use was restricted and subject to curfews. Blackouts were an effort to not reveal inhabited locations to the enemy, out of fear that they would be bombed. Turning back on the lights at night, and using floodlights, symbolized national survival, endurance, and collectivity.⁶⁹ Lights brought with them relief and confirmation that the war in Europe was truly over. A side-note added by Hawkins to her letter recording the events of VE Day stated “Edinburgh Castle was flood-lit for the first time since 1939. To us this glorious sight symbolized the true end of the war in Europe.”⁷⁰ Robson was similarly affected by the use of light again at night while in Brussels, Belgium; she wrote “It was a blaze of lights and downtown huge flares and Very lights were being set off. We gaped at buildings without blackouts. It is simply amazing.”⁷¹ After almost six years of blackouts, to suddenly see lights again was wonderful, illuminating both the physical, previously gloomy, streets and people’s spirits as the figurative gloom of war was lifted.⁷² The use of lights, combined with the widespread VE Day celebrations going on, added happiness and excitement to servicewomen’s lives by proving to them that their efforts had not been in vain.

After VE Day these servicewomen were eager to go home after spending so long away from home and their families. Doing so, however, took a while. Robson wrote home

⁶⁹ Sumartojo, “Dazzling Relief,” 59.

⁷⁰ Mary Hawkins Buch, side-note accompanying letter to Marion Strang, May 7, 1945, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 167.

⁷¹ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 11, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 156. “Very lights” were a type of coloured signal flare.

⁷² Sumartojo, “Dazzling Relief,” 68.

that “There are no rumours about when we go home but I don’t think it should be very long – offhand I would say I would be home for Christmas and that is a very pessimistic viewpoint.”⁷³ It turns out her prediction was not far off, as she officially returned back to London, Ont., that December. Drinkwater was cautious about sending home word that she was returning, not wanting to give them false hope, telling her parents in a letter “Our going home is still pending. Some say before Christmas, some say after. I’m keeping my fingers crossed for before. I’ll let you know.”⁷⁴ When they did receive word they were going home, servicewomen tended to be more generous with their expressions of excitement. Drinkwater sent a letter to her parents about a month before she arrived home, writing “I am sending a cable the day I leave, so you’ll know, when you receive it, that I’ll be on the ocean. I am so excited.”⁷⁵ Besides stating directly that she was excited, the letter also reveals the need for her parents to know the exact times she was coming home. Now that the war was over, there was no more fear of leaked travel plans reaching the enemy, and servicewomen could write freely about their location and movement plans.

Ultimately, service-sponsored media had promised women would feel positively about their time in service, but it was often the things not mentioned, such as living conditions or letters from home that ultimately could positively affect their morale. The services had focused more closely on what they thought would appeal to servicewomen and affect their morale. This focus was often based on gendered stereotypes, such as putting an emphasis on the design of uniforms, presuming that physical appearance was

⁷³ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 7, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 154.

⁷⁴ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, August 6, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 229.

⁷⁵ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, September 20, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 230.

of utmost importance to women. As shown in this chapter, sometimes the services were wrong in this regard and other factors were more influential in affecting servicewomen's morale, such as living conditions or letters from home, than they thought.

It is clear that these servicewomen recorded their experiences in ways that both fit and broke with those emphasized in recruitment advertising, government propaganda, and popular media. Servicewomen created experiences for themselves when the situations they were in were not ideal that elicited feelings of excitement and enjoyment in their lives and helped to maintain their morale. For example, if where they were posted, or the job they performed, was not as exciting as they had thought it would be, these servicewomen found ways to ameliorate this, for example, by asking for better jobs or traveling. This suggests that they were able to control their own emotional experiences to some degree. Although there were setbacks, such as homesickness or small annoyances, they frequently found happiness through work, friendships, exploration, and celebrations, realizing that it was often up to themselves to maintain their morale.

Pride

Propaganda and advertising had promised women that they would feel pride in their service if they chose to enlist. This promise was fulfilled, as many of the servicewomen studied recorded that they felt this emotion in relation to their time in service in many different ways. The pride they felt was for their country, but it was also felt on a personal level for their own contributions. This is important because having this feeling for their contributions could make servicewomen motivated to enlist, and motivated to perform well at their jobs after they enlisted. As psychologists Lisa A. Williams and David DeSteno argue, "when feeling proud about a recognized

accomplishment, an individual might feel an incentive to pursue further action in the valued domain,” or feel impelled to “pursue valued success despite short-term costs.”⁷⁶ In this way pride worked as an important motivating force, making servicewomen want to do their best at their jobs. As seen in the previous chapter, this is exactly what propaganda and advertising had wanted women to feel and told them they ought to feel. Moreover, the services recognized that these feelings of value and satisfaction were rare – telling them that they would *get* to feel pride because they had chosen to enlist. This was essential to morale because having this feeling in their work and country made servicewomen confident that what they were doing was important to the war effort.

A main factor that women noted feeling proud of was their own work. Even though many servicewomen were doing clerical work, perhaps similar to what they may have done before the war, the new procedures they had to learn within a massive military organization were new to them.⁷⁷ When servicewomen succeeded in learning these new procedures, such as morning drill, and excelled at them, it was a cause for pride in themselves and their work. For example, after spending months learning drill sequences in a precision squad, Burgess boasted in her diary that “Today we put on the long-awaited show for the Air Chief Commandant Forbes of the W.A.A.F. It was perfect.”⁷⁸ While she does not explicitly say that she is proud of her work, “It was perfect” reveals a sense of pride and confidence in her performance. Lamb expresses similar sentiments about her work, not quite saying she is proud of it but using language in her diary that clearly

⁷⁶ Lisa A. Williams and David DeSteno, “Pride and Perseverance: The Motivational Role of Pride,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 94, no. 6 (2008): 1008.

⁷⁷ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 63.

⁷⁸ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, November 24, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

showed that she was. Lamb, along with other servicewomen, had spent weeks planning a Christmas show to perform at camp. On December 21, 1943, she recorded in her illustrated diary the headline “Opening Night Blazing Success!”⁷⁹ In the article below she mentions that “- and the Colonel liked it, too!”⁸⁰ Again, she does not mention being proud of her efforts, but by deeming the show a success and liked by a person of authority she is alluding to the fact that she was proud of the results of her hard work. This is how servicewomen tended to show pride in their work, by labeling their efforts as successful.

Aside from being proud of their own work and achievements, these servicewomen recorded pride in their country and its overall effort in the war as well. Servicewomen were not just proud of their own actions, they recognized that the war effort was a group effort and expressed a type of pride in their country that contributed to feelings of patriotism. Servicewomen realized that when newspapers, media, or civilians in Canada talked about how proud they were of the Canadian military that it included servicewomen as well. For example, Drinkwater wrote home how she felt about her role: “Some of the boys say we should glow with pride to be wearing a Canadian uniform and, needless to say, we are. The unsung hero would be a title for every soldier, no matter how small his part.”⁸¹ This demonstrates that servicewomen recognized that they should feel pride in their role, no matter how small, in the war effort. It also shows that while women’s work before the war might not have been as valued, in the fight against Nazism all roles were considered vital. The military system stressed how important even the smallest of roles

⁷⁹ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Opening Night A Blazing Success as Company Plays Packed House,” December 21, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M. R5336-20-1-E*, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸⁰ Bobak, “Opening Night A Blazing Success.”

⁸¹ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, January 7, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 150.

was to the greater war effort; that if everyone played their part then the whole would succeed.⁸² Hawkins felt this about her role in the RCAF, expressing in a letter that “There certainly have never been prouder, happier girls than we are. The fact that Canada thinks we’re useful enough to send to England really thrills me.”⁸³ This reveals that she was proud of her work, seeing it as essential enough to the war effort that she would be sent across the Atlantic to be closer to the main action.

As much as the country could be proud of their servicewomen, servicewomen were also proud of their country. On her way overseas, Lamb experienced a sense of intense pride swell up in her, writing in her diary “This is a good land...I love my country – it’s a terrific place.”⁸⁴ Other times this feeling is not directly recorded, but alluded to by servicewomen. While seeing a friendly football game between the Americans and Canadians in London, Drinkwater wrote home that “the American brass band struck up “Oh Canada”, it made me feel all funny inside as the song usually does.”⁸⁵ Here we can assume this “funny” feeling was pride in, or love for, her country. It seems that this pride or love for one’s country did not have to mean that servicewomen agreed with how much Canada was contributing to the war. Robson wrote in her letters that she thought Canada should still be giving more to the war effort, specifically in the form of conscription, but she also noted two years later that “Really a good way to appreciate Canada is to leave it”, which means that she did have some sort of positive feelings for her country, or at

⁸² Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 62.

⁸³ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, October 19, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 60.

⁸⁴ Molly Lamb Bobak, illustrated diary, June 1945, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M. R5336-20-1-E*, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸⁵ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, March 24, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 90.

least missed it.⁸⁶ Through these writings it is clear that these women's experiences of being in the services, and the reactions to their roles by the media or others, led them to feel pride in themselves and their country about their place in the war.

Amusement, Humour, and Friendship

To maintain good spirits and morale within the military services, women had to have a sense of humour. In fact, a "sense of humour" was specifically listed as a quality of morale in an CWAAF administration training manual, marking it as important for servicewomen to have.⁸⁷ Humour gave servicewomen the ability to deal with issues that they had no control over. As shown in other instances of war, humour allowed for the mental release needed to survive "unpleasant conditions and the un-welcome proximity of fellow-soldiers."⁸⁸ Encouraging humour amongst servicewomen not only urged them to laugh to ease tension, it also built and solidified social bonds between women.⁸⁹ In this way it was helpful to them individually and to the cohesion of the group. It was not easy to start an entirely new way of life, surrounded by many other women trying to do the same. There was little room in the service for personal time and space, literally, as servicewomen could find themselves in barracks with up to 140 other women.⁹⁰ As Eve Milne wrote in her basic training log, "The trouble is when in a dorm with a large number of girls and one or two has a cough, there is not much chance for the rest to get sleep."⁹¹

⁸⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents and sister, May 30, 1943 and January 6, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 53 and 142.

⁸⁷ CWAAF, "C.W.A.A.F. Administration Course: Discipline – Lecture One. The Qualities of Leadership and Duties of Officers and N.C.O.'s," 181.9009 D 847, Box 40, W-300013. Library and Archives Canada, 2.

⁸⁸ Sandra Swart, "The Terrible Laughter of the Afrikaner:" Towards a Social History of Humor," *Journal of Social History* 42, no. 4 (Summer 2009): 891-2.

⁸⁹ Matthew Gervais and David Sloan Wilson, "The Evolutions and Functions of Laughter and Humor: A Synthetic Approach," *The Quarterly Review of Biology* 80, no. 4 (December 2005): 407.

⁹⁰ Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 163.

⁹¹ Eve Milne, personal log, August 22, 1943, MG28 I 471 V. 3, Library and Archives Canada.

Servicewomen unused to these types of annoyances found themselves having to adjust. In order to do so, the “shared experience” of communal living required a certain degree of humour to make things run smoothly.⁹² It also required friendship. When considering the lives of servicewomen, fun, humour, and friendship often went hand in hand, because it was usually friends who brought fun and humour into these servicewomen’s lives.

Servicewomen were forced to live with unfamiliar women and form new friendships when they entered basic training or when they were shipped to new areas for work. Often awkward around each other at first, the ice between women was usually broken by laughter.⁹³ This was sometimes the first step in bonding with the other women. One of Hawkins’ early letters describes the aftermath of a round of inoculations that were required of all new servicewomen, “I wish you could have seen us trying to climb into our top bunks last night. It was too hopelessly funny. We all helped each other, and the last one had to make it herself, with the rest of us cheering each time she almost made it, and booing when she fell back.”⁹⁴ The double bunks in most of the barracks were a specific spot of humour for servicewomen. Lamb recorded in her diary that that the day she was to leave Vancouver for basic training in Vermillion, “I fell out of my top bunk, through a clothes line to the floor and all the kids said that was a good beginning.”⁹⁵ Humorous moments experienced by these servicewomen drew them closer together and eased tension caused by many women having to live in tight quarters.

⁹² Gossage, *Greatcoats and Glamour Boots*, 163.

⁹³ Ziegler, *We Serve that Men May Fly*, 21.

⁹⁴ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, February 23, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 22.

⁹⁵ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Lamb Leaves for Training,” December 8, 1942, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

Once initial tensions had been eased, servicewomen often formed close friendships and learned to rely on each other, feeling that they “were all in it together”.⁹⁶ There are few scholarly articles that talk about the importance of servicewomen’s friendships, but it is useful to draw on scholarship about the experiences of male soldiers. Similarly separated by their military status from civilians, both at home and overseas, men in the services “often found solace, companionship and reaffirmed national strength and patriotism in their relationships with one another.”⁹⁷ Servicewomen were no different, the friendships they formed were often focused on keeping each other’s spirits up and, therefore, keeping up morale. With each other they could be found occasionally “griping” over annoyances or pulling small acts of mischief that relieved everyday tensions, allowing them to adopt a “cheerful, get-on-with-the-job” attitude that made their work easier.⁹⁸ Lamb recorded that her morale was low after learning she would be moving stations from Ottawa to Hamilton. One reason she recorded feeling this way was that “I hate to leave my friends,” but that “my morale...came back with a rush as I saw the huge camp of white huts and when I met my new roommates.”⁹⁹ Even though she was sad to leave her friends, she acknowledges that the addition of new roommates in Hamilton raised her spirits again. This demonstrates that servicewomen’s morale was affected by their friendships with other servicewomen, similar to that of soldiers. It also proves that recruitment advertising had not lied to women in this regard, they certainly

⁹⁶ Anonymous, “Women remember roles during Second World War as well as camaraderie,” *Whitehorse Star*, Whitehorse, YT, November 12, 2010.

⁹⁷ Emily Gann, “Correspondence, Camaraderie, and Community: The Second World War for a Mother and Son,” MA Thesis, Carlton University, 2012, 32.

⁹⁸ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 56.

⁹⁹ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Morale Marches On,” July 26, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

met “a great crowd of girls.”¹⁰⁰ Unlike advertising’s emphasis on uniforms, recruiting agents had not miscalculated the importance of friendships to servicewomen.

Humor was a bonding agent within these friendships. Having a sense of humour made their work bearable and was especially essential for the women serving overseas because they did not just need to alleviate boredom or loneliness, but also to deal with danger and fear. Many servicewomen went through intense bombing raids in England and on the continent that deeply unsettled them. Making light during these instances was one of the most effective ways of coping, providing an “outlet for nervous energy.”¹⁰¹ For example, Drinkwater recorded how she and her fellow servicewomen dealt with some harrowing near misses while stationed in Antwerp, Belgium, helping with clerical work. After experiencing the bombing of the building across the street from them, as well as a theatre blown up as they were on their way there to see a show, Drinkwater wrote home that, “All through this time the girls were grand and everyone would joke and laugh...through it all was the wonderful comradeship that only comes in times of danger.”¹⁰² Hawkins also expressed her thankfulness for comradeship, stating in a letter that “You have to be in a few tight corners to find out for yourself what honest-to-goodness comradeship is.”¹⁰³ As shown in combat situations, laughter and friendship helped individuals keep up morale and survive unpleasant situations, which servicewomen certainly endured when in close proximity to the bombing campaigns overseas. This demonstrates that the personal relationships servicewomen experienced

¹⁰⁰ “The Proudest Parents in Canada,” *Maclean’s Magazine*, October 1, 1944.

¹⁰¹ Swart, “The Terrible Laughter of the Afrikaner,” 892.

¹⁰² Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, January 7, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 143.

¹⁰³ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, May 17, 1944, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 125.

helped ease the effects of negative experiences, keeping up their positive spirits, or morale.

“It was like bells”: Love and Flirtation while in Service

Another, mostly positive, emotion that most of the servicewomen examined in this study experienced was finding love during the war. Love is defined here as a mixture of positive emotions, such as joy or interest, when felt “in the context of a safe, interpersonal connection or relationship,” and a feeling that can “spark motivational changes.”¹⁰⁴

Although not true for all women, heterosexual romance sometimes became an integral part of servicewomen’s lives. Men and women being thrown together from all over the Empire, and often facing the same sense of unknown fate, led to many rapid and heated romances for servicewomen. Both servicewomen and soldiers had been taken out of familiar environments, namely childhood communities, and placed into new cultures, causing loneliness that they naturally tried to fill.¹⁰⁵ Wartime marriage numbers soared, with the suggestion that they were “contracted by young people because death was whispering in their ears.”¹⁰⁶ The uncertainties of war made young people more likely to marry sooner than later, afraid that they might never get the chance due to one of them, most likely the man, being killed in action.¹⁰⁷ This did not just include marriages of men and women who had briefly known each other, often couples who had already been planning to marry each other simply moved the date up in response to this threat.¹⁰⁸ The

¹⁰⁴ Barbara L. Fredrickson, “Positive Emotions Broaden and Build,” *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology* 47 (2013): 6 and 41.

¹⁰⁵ W. Hugh Conrad, “Athene,” 278.

¹⁰⁶ Weatherford, *American Women and World War II*, 247.

¹⁰⁷ Anne Milan, “One Hundred Years of Families,” *Canadian Social Trends* 56 (Spring 2000): 4.

¹⁰⁸ Weatherford, 248.

fear of death, combined with moral codes at the time that deemed women ought to be married before engaging in sex, led to more frequent weddings.¹⁰⁹ Statistics demonstrated this increase, with the *Vancouver Sun* reporting after the war that the Army alone was responsible for approximately 18,000 weddings between servicemen and servicewomen, and other studies revealing that between 1937 and 1954 the rate of women between the ages twenty and twenty-four marrying rose from 75 per 1,000 to 100 per 1,000.¹¹⁰ This clearly demonstrated that Canadians, including servicewomen, were more often choosing to marry during the Second World War.

Even if marriage rates were rising, romance while in the armed forces did not always have to end with a walk down the aisle. Many servicewomen enjoyed the attentions of men without necessarily feeling the need to marry them. They accepted the inevitable flirtations that occurred living in close proximity to many men, which added excitement to their lives. It was simply fun to meet men and go to dances and on dates, adding excitement to what were sometimes boring jobs for servicewomen. Burgess' diary entries reflect this, usually briefly describing her boredom or frustration with work and then spending the rest of the entry detailing what was more interesting to her: the time she spent with men. For example, on September 15, 1943, she writes that she "went through sequence so many times I felt like screaming," referring to training in drill procedures. This was followed by recording how pleased she was by receiving a letter from one man

¹⁰⁹ Weatherford, 247-8. Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All,"* 186, Women in the armed forces were supposed to be "respectable," meaning that they were expected to be sexually chaste, not engaging in sexual acts until after marriage.

¹¹⁰ Pierson, *"They're Still Women After All,"* 185, 215. Other estimates put marriage number peaking at only 10.9 marriages per 1000 people in Canada as a whole, see Milan, "One Hundred Years of Families," 4.

back home, and then details of her date with another man that evening.¹¹¹ Burgess created similar entries on September 20th and 23rd, briefly expressing her displeasure with drill sequence, followed by more in-depth descriptions of dates she had the same day.¹¹² While it is clear that she could be at times annoyed or unhappy with her work in the service, flirtations with men were able to distract her.

Many servicewomen met their husbands during the war, either getting married as it was going on or soon after its finish. Buch met her husband George early on in her training, marrying him in January of 1944. Robson married a man by the name of Eddie while overseas in the fall of 1945. Finally, Lamb met her husband Bruno after being posted overseas in June of 1945 to document the aftermath of the war, marrying him once they returned to Toronto later that year. It is unclear with the other servicewomen examined if they also met husbands during the war or not. Burgess married a man with the last name Erickson, but this name is not stated anywhere in her diary. The romantic fate of Drinkwater is also a mystery, research only revealing that she retired to her beloved childhood home of Edgewood farm later in her life with her dog Hobo-Nell. Similar unknowns apply to the other servicewomen examined as well. While it is not a rule that all servicewomen met their partners during the war, frequent interactions between these servicewomen and servicemen often resulted in romantic relationships.

While love is generally regarded as a positive emotion, it could also be a double-edged sword. Sometimes it led to heartbreak and confusion, especially if women were

¹¹¹ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, September 15, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

¹¹² Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, September 20 and 23, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

unsure of their feelings, or the feelings of their romantic partners. Other times, there was anxiety because of the dangerous realities of war that separated men and women from each other. Burgess wrote quite a bit about her love life, and, even though she notes multiple times that she had fun with soldiers, her romantic entanglements also caused her quite a bit of anxiety and confusion. For example, she constantly questioned the feelings of a boy named Wil that she left behind, comparing him to her new beau, Eric. In one passage she writes, “Gosh, I’m so confused. I loved Wil so much & now I think a terrible lot about Eric.”¹¹³ In another entry, after Eric proposed to her, she stated that “I couldn’t say yes or no, because I love him, but in a different way to Wil. Gee, I’m so confused.”¹¹⁴ Eventually Burgess went home and saw Wil, deciding that she did not love him anymore, and her diary ends soon thereafter, making it unclear if she and Eric ever progressed further with their relationship. Robson may have also had a similar situation. In May of 1945 she wrote home that her parents should not worry about her getting married, even though a man she was seeing, named John, had said that “if I am ever in England when he is there he intends to drag me to the alter by my hair before I have the chance to change my mind.”¹¹⁵ By stating that he would have to marry her before she changed her mind, the letter reveals that Robson must have already either turned him down, or was uncertain about an engagement. His fear of her uncertainty was warranted, as in July of that same year she wrote her parents about a man named Eddie, and that she had “applied for permission to marry” him.¹¹⁶ A few months later, in October, she wrote again that she had

¹¹³ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, October 26, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

¹¹⁴ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, November 14, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

¹¹⁵ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 7, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 154.

¹¹⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, July 31, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 166.

“sent a cablegram from London when Eddie and I were married.”¹¹⁷ It appears that Robson also experienced some confusion in her love life, although hers seems to have a happy conclusion. The romantic relationships that servicewomen engaged them gave them a reprieve from service-life, adding excitement, and possibly ending in the life-changing decision to marry.

“Morale Marches On”

Keeping up morale was very important because it was seen as needed to win the war. Servicewomen were inspired by their officers and fellow servicewomen to keep up morale, as well as by civilians they saw around them. British civilians especially made good models for morale. This was not surprising, as the Ministry of Information in Britain made sure to stress the importance of morale to the British people, defining it as the “determination to carry on with the utmost energy” and the “readiness for many minor and some major sacrifices.”¹¹⁸ This message was worked into all aspects of British life, such as the importance of limiting consumption and obeying rationing to morale.¹¹⁹ It was also displayed in the British cinema, with films such as *London Can Take It* and *Britain Can Take It*, depicting the high and steady morale of the British public in spite of the tribulations of German bombing.¹²⁰ In the thick of bombing campaigns, the morale of British civilians overseas was noted by servicewomen posted there. Drinkwater mentioned the strength of British morale many times in letters home, writing on separate

¹¹⁷ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, October 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 167.

¹¹⁸ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 2.

¹¹⁹ See here Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

¹²⁰ Anthony Aldgate and Jeffrey Richards, *Britain Can Take It: British Cinema in the Second World War* (London: I.B. Tauris and Co. Ltd., 1986), 121-2.

occasions that “they carry on as much as possible in the same peacetime manner. One felt immediately relaxed,” after bombing raids “With true British spirit, they are starting to build again,” and “They still carry on, doing what they think they should and what they believe in. It will take a lot more than Hitler and his 80 million to change them.”¹²¹ Drinkwater was not the only servicewoman overseas to mention the displays of morale she saw around her. Robson also noted the steadiness of British morale, stating in her letters, “The English seem very patient,” and that “People are very calm” when they talked about the bombs.¹²² Also overseas, Hawkins agreed with this point, writing in a letter that the British were “no panic-stricken mob.”¹²³ Calmness and continued productivity can be considered as indicators of high morale.¹²⁴ For years it has been the consensus that British civilians had largely endured the war with “fortitude, a capacity to adapt, and unwavering resolve,” which servicewomen agree with in their letters.¹²⁵ In this way, British civilians made excellent models for Canadian servicewomen to observe for how they should demonstrate morale.

British civilian morale was a good model for Canadian servicewomen to base their own attitudes on, but they had often recognized the importance of morale long before they were shipped overseas. As officer training demonstrated in Chapter One, there was no shortage of information that informed servicewomen about the importance of morale.

¹²¹ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to her parents, August 1, 1943, August 11, 1943, and January 24, 1944 (respectively), *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 57, 63, and 83.

¹²² Kathleen Robson Roe, letters to her parents, January 13, 1943 and July 4, 1944 (respectively), *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 34 and 107.

¹²³ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, December 26, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 82.

¹²⁴ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 3.

¹²⁵ Mackay, *Half the Battle*, 3. Mackay has some issues with this consensus, as historians have generally come to this conclusion by examining the earlier years of the war only, September 1939-June 1941, 4. Mackay argues that civilian morale did not remain constant, but changed as the nature of the war evolved, 9.

Sometimes servicewomen articulated how to handle morale in addition to this general written information. For example, Lamb recorded in her diary a speech she gave entitled “The Vermillion Address” that outlined the tricky balance of keeping up morale during war. In her speech she created an elaborate example which theorized that there were three “sisters” named Sabotage, Propaganda, and Espionage which had a great effect on their parents, “Mr. and Mrs. Morale.” Lamb recognized that the “Morale family” was not limited to one nationality, and that the battle of keeping morale high (the Morale family happy) was being fought by both sides. Ultimately, the goal was to keep the Morale family in high spirits for Canada only, not the opposing side, simply ending the speech with “And I think we all know the best ways to do that.”¹²⁶ To what she is referring here is a bit unclear, but she was right to assume that effort had to be put into keeping up morale.

There were definite hinderances to keeping up morale that reinforced the idea that it was something that needed to be worked at. As Hawkins wrote in her first letter to Marion Strang, “the spirit is willing”, even if the mind and body are about to lie down and cross their feet!”¹²⁷ At times servicewomen were tired or became discouraged, but they were able to try and keep up their spirit. Lamb had numerous set-backs that should have lowered her morale, but she specifically noted the opposite. In one instance when she was sent to Hamilton for a new posting she recorded being “peaked and tired and hot,” but the headline of her illustrated diary read “Morale Marches On!...That “Intangible Something”

¹²⁶ Molly Lamb Bobak, “The Vermillion Address,” January 5, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁷ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, February 21, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 19. Double quotation marks are intentional, “the spirit is willing” was taken as inspiration from the Y.M.C.A. stamp on the paper she was using, with the words “Spirit, Mind, Body” as part of the insignia.

Called Morale, Catches Lamb in Hamilton!”¹²⁸ In another instance, Lamb contracted a bad rash from poison ivy on her legs, but stated “However, morale is high and spirits are fighting mad.”¹²⁹ This demonstrates that even though servicewomen could face setbacks that normally would be thought to have lowered their spirits, they maintain their morale instead. As Lamb illustrated through her speech, morale was not an inherent quality within servicewomen, it had to be constantly worked at and maintained, even in unpleasant situations.

While factors advertised in propaganda or the media *did* influence servicewomen’s emotions, such as overseas postings, they were not the only occurrences that elicited excitement, pride, humour, love, or contributed to high morale. The everyday events of servicewomen’s lives were just as important, if not more so, to maintaining their morale. The personal connections the women made with those around them were especially important, as they helped to create positive emotions during times of struggle. As much as servicewomen valued these relationships, they recognized the similar importance they had on morale. In addition to servicewomen helping each other maintain morale, they knew that it constantly had to be worked at. Luckily, many things in their day-to-day lives made this easier. Letters from home, romances, friendships, and work they enjoyed all contributed to keeping up their spirits. It also helped that in many cases the things promised to them in recruitment advertising, or emphasised in the media, did come to pass, such as overseas work. Servicewomen were able to travel to new places, meet new people, have new exciting work opportunities, or get the chance to travel

¹²⁸ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Morale Marches On,” July 26, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

¹²⁹ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Horrible Fate of Innocent Private!” August 3, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

overseas. Although there were some hardships and annoyances they had to face, ultimately, being able to do these things was a cause for positive feelings and emotions.

Chapter Three: Negative Emotions

Advertising and propaganda had proposed to servicewomen how and why their service was going to be a positive experience, and as seen in the last chapter, many of the situations depicted were fulfilled in some way. What this media and the services had not informed women about were the negative aspects of enlisted life they might face during their service, understandably so, as to not deter women from enlisting. In this chapter negative emotions will be considered as those that result in experiences that made women “ill or unhappy,” as opposed to positive emotions resulting from experiences that made them feel “well and happy.”¹ Additionally, negative emotions can also be a result of “interpreting something as being against one’s wishes.”² The diaries and letters of Catherine K. Drinkwater, Molly Lamb Bobak, Joyce Burgess, Mary Hawkins Buch, and Kathleen Robson Roe reveal that they frequently felt unhappy, or felt that they had to do something that was against their wishes, but realized that they had to overcome these emotions in order to maintain morale. This was made more difficult by the fact that they were expected to perform emotions in ways associated with their gender, such as exuding calmness or compassion.³

In contrast to the last chapters, recording feeling unhappy or forced to do something they did not want to do is important because servicewomen found out soon after enlisting that service life was not always as exciting, glamorous, or as full of

¹ Robert C. Solomon and Lori D. Stone, “On “Positive” and “Negative” Emotions,” *Journal for the Theory of Social Behaviour* 32, 4 (December 2002): 423.

² R.M. Gordon, *The Structure of Emotions: Investigations in Cognitive Philosophy* (Cambridge, UK.: Cambridge University Press, 1987) as cited in Gerrod W. Parrott, *The Positive Side of Negative Emotions* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2014), xi.

³ Elizabeth Mesock, “Affective Technologies of War: US Female Counterinsurgents and the Performance of Gendered Labour,” *Radical History Review* 123 (October 2015): 61-2. (60-86).

opportunities as had been suggested in propaganda or other media, such as newspapers. Some of the negative emotions that servicewomen experienced were less serious than others. For example, the servicewomen examined experienced homesickness, boredom, annoyance, and various other types of anxiety and sadness that were not life-threatening or were relatively easy for them to distract themselves from. At other times their experiences caused them greater ill-effects or unhappiness, such as times when those posted overseas experienced heightened fear and anxiety from German air raids, or the grief that servicewomen experienced when they lost people they knew to the war. These feelings were not what had been depicted to them in propaganda or the media, but they were still endured by servicewomen. Negative emotions felt by servicewomen were primarily caused by their disillusionment with the women's services, realizing that the realities of service-life were not as glamorous as propaganda or the media had portrayed. Even with this realization, negative emotions were still recognized by the servicewomen feeling them as harmful to morale, which needed to be maintained at all times. These feelings then were not just unpleasant for the individual going through them, they were also understood to be dangerous to the larger group, and to reflect poorly upon their gender, with women understood to have a particular role in keeping up their own spirits, contributing to collective morale. In their efforts to counteract these harmful emotions, the most successful remedy was the personal connections that servicewomen made with those around them and maintained with those back home.

When recording their time in service, women tended to focus on the happier features of their experience, but the realities of war and service life could be a lot less uplifting than they had anticipated. Some had troubles with the loss of individuality after

they enlisted, as barracks life required them to relinquish their privacy and endure increased regimentation.⁴ It was also hard to be away from their families for long periods of time, with both sides suffering from this separation.⁵ These changes, combined with tedious work, or annoyance with other women and the military system, led to frustration and discontent. While these frustrations would have been equally felt by newly enlisted men, it is interesting to note that some negative emotions seem to have been fairly gendered. A survey of American servicewomen revealed that they were less likely to feel that their time in service delayed starting their life, when compared to the feelings of male veterans.⁶ It is likely that Canadian servicewomen felt the same. Even so, life within the services was not always easy or fun, which made maintaining morale difficult at times.

Much like their London counterparts, Canadian servicewomen of all branches were expected to keep up morale at all times, but this could be difficult if they were experiencing negative emotions. Small, constant acts that helped keep up morale, such as letter writing, were looked upon as ideal for handling negative feelings, as it was generally thought that being able to carry on with work during the war, even under conditions of considerable strain, was more important than a few individual acts of exceptional bravery.⁷ This attitude was an emphasis by the government, encouraging stoicism while negative feelings, like fear, were to be suppressed in order to maintain

⁴ Doris Weatherford, *American Women and World War II* (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1990), 56.

⁵ D'Ann Campbell, "Servicewomen of World War II," *Armed Forces and Society* 16, no. 2 (Winter 1990): 261.

⁶ D'Ann Campbell, 261.

⁷ H. Pelling, *Britain and the Second World War* (London: Collins The Fontana History of War Society, 1970), 100, in Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester, UK.: Manchester University Press, 2002), 6.

morale.⁸ This meant that while servicewomen experienced negative feelings during their service, they knew that they were still expected to perform as usual, as to not damage morale. To combat negative feelings they did what American sociologist Arlie Hochschild refers to as “surface acting,” in which performances were through body language, with servicewomen changing how they outwardly appeared in the attempt to convey themselves as in high spirits.⁹ This could include smiling or acting confident. They could also perform “deep acting,” in which sheer will to feel something evoked actual emotion.¹⁰ Using either method, servicewomen were expected to convey emotional responses assumed to be associated with their gender, such as calmness or compassion.¹¹ The servicewomen studied demonstrated this by seeking out ways to try to distract themselves and those they wrote to from the negative aspects of war life. At times this meant that servicewomen alluded to negative feelings, acknowledging them, but then tried to convince themselves and their readers that they were still alright by putting a positive spin on the situation, using humour, or downplaying troubling events.

Homesickness

Homesickness was an ever-prevalent issue for servicewomen, as many were experiencing their first time leaving home for an extended period of time. First, they would have to undergo basic training, usually at the major training depots located in Ontario or Quebec, and then they could be placed anywhere that their services were

⁸ Amy Bell, “Landscapes of Fear: Wartime Britain, 1939-1945,” *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 1 (January 2009): 155.

⁹ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 35.

¹⁰ Hochschild, *The Managed Heart*, 39.

¹¹ Mesock, “Affective Technologies of War,” 61-2.

required. This included being shipped overseas, after which they would not be able to see their families, childhood friends, or homes for up to years at a time. Catherine Drinkwater is one of these women, stationed overseas in London, France, and Belgium with the CWAC from 1943 to 1945. While in London, Drinkwater wrote home “Ah me! Here we are sitting in the mess listening to dear old Guy Lombardo and his “Sweetest music this side of heaven”. Makes me homesick for the evenings at Edgewood Farm.”¹²

Homesickness has been frequently tied to war, even before the term was defined as it is today. First made part of the English language in the 1750s, and documented among Welsh soldiers in the 1780s, the term “homesickness” was used interchangeably with the term “nostalgia” up until the early twentieth century.¹³ Nostalgia has been studied in relation to war for quite a while. For example, in the American Civil War there was real fear among soldiers that bouts of homesickness could turn into full-blown cases of nostalgia, which was considered a life-threatening illness.¹⁴ It was thought by physicians at the time that lethal forms of nostalgia could include symptoms such as “sadness, disturbed sleep, fluctuations in appetite, heart palpitations, diminished senses, dullness of mind, and a marked tendency to dwell solely on the past,” and could only be cured by a visit home.¹⁵ The servicewomen studied did not fear for their lives while away from home, but they did recognize that homesickness made them unhappy, thus harming their morale.

¹² Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, July 16, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 102.

¹³ Susan J. Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again: Homesickness and Nostalgia in U.S. History,” *The Journal of American History* 94, 2 (September 2007): 470.

¹⁴ Lori Duin Kelly, “Managing Memories: Treating and Controlling Homesickness during the Civil War,” *J Med Humanit* 39 (2018): 287.

¹⁵ Frances Clark, “So Lonesome I Could Die: Nostalgia and Debates over Emotional Control in the Civil War North,” *Journal of Social History* 42, 2 (Winter, 2007): 253.

In the early twentieth century the definition of what “nostalgia” was slowly changed, evolving to indicate “a bittersweet yearning for a lost time,” a “past time” that was unattainable, rather than having the same meaning as “homesickness” or denoting a serious medical condition.¹⁶ Susan J. Matt argues that as the definition of “nostalgia” changed the term “homesickness” also evolved to mean a “longing for a particular home,” presumably including both the physical space and the people within it.¹⁷ This is the meaning that servicewomen like Drinkwater would have associated with the term. Even so, homesickness was not necessarily seen as less of a problem than it had been in wars in the past. For example, in the United States, naval doctors still saw it as a “constant problem” among new male recruits in training centers, considering it a “weaking emotion [sic]”.¹⁸ It is interesting, with this dismissal of homesickness as unmanly, to look at how military officials treated homesickness in women, and how they dealt with it as individuals.

There is no study that looks at homesickness in servicewomen during the Second World War, but servicewomen’s experiences with this emotion are comparable to women leaving for college in the mid-forties. In both cases, it was often young women who were first leaving familiar homes for an extended period of time. A study of how homesickness was affecting freshman college women at Smith College in 1945, found that almost half of the subjects experienced either long or short periods of homesickness.¹⁹ Even young women who had experience being away from home

¹⁶ Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again,” 470.

¹⁷ Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again,” 469.

¹⁸ Matt, “You Can’t Go Home Again,” 494.

¹⁹ Annelies Argelander Rose, “A Study of Homesickness in College Freshmen,” *The Journal of Social Psychology* 26 (1945): 186.

previously, at boarding schools or summer camps, recorded feeling homesick.²⁰ The training centers and operating depots that servicewomen would have been sent to would have mirrored the conditions of college life: living with many other women in dorm-like facilities, learning new information, and having fairly structured schedules. Like college women, servicewomen experienced homesickness when thrust into a new environment away from their homes. One can also draw upon studies of the First World War.

Women's experiences would have been similar to British nurses and servicewomen during the First World War, who felt homesick, but despite it, were still dedicated to their purpose. For example, one nurse recounted that she would feel homesick, wanting to have "a good cry," but realized that the "more one gives way to it, the worse it becomes."²¹ In this way servicewomen felt homesick, but they remembered that morale was at stake, and believed that giving into their emotions only made things feel worse.

Homesickness was rarely discussed in "official" types of documents, propaganda, or the media, as seen in chapter one. If it was mentioned, it was only to stress the importance of subverting its effects.²² For example, military advertising mainly alluded to homesickness by promising new friendships, but advertisers also made a conscious effort to not mention it explicitly because it was felt to undermine morale.²³ If it was not frequently mentioned in advertising or official documents, homesickness was a common

²⁰ Rose, 197.

²¹ Vivian Newman, *We Also Served: The Forgotten Women of the First World War* (Barnsley, South Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2014), 41, 159.

²² For example, *The Wise CWAC* noted that some recruits were homesick, especially when in the hospital, and servicewomen were encouraged to write to them in order to lift back up their spirits. "Padre's Corner," *The Wise CWAC*, May 1943, RG 24 vol. 16,627, Library and Archives Canada.

²³ For example, *The Wise CWAC* noted that some recruits were homesick, especially when in the hospital, and servicewomen were encouraged to write to them in order to lift back up their spirits. "Padre's Corner," *The Wise CWAC*, May 1943, RG 24 vol. 16,627, Library and Archives Canada.

subject in the personal documents these women produced. Longing for one's family or home was the most frequent negative emotional experience noted by servicewomen in their diaries and letters. Many of the servicewomen directly stated when they were feeling homesick. Drinkwater noted in a letter home that a group picture sent by her family had made her homesick.²⁴ Even though letters were thought of as ways to keep up morale, they also at times made women feel homesick for what they were missing out on while away. In her first few weeks of basic training in southern Ontario, Joyce Burgess similarly stated in her diary that "I'm getting awfully lonesome & homesick for everyone," referring to her family on the west coast.²⁵ Lamb also recorded feelings of the same nature in her illustrated diary after a particularly painful run-in with poison ivy, writing that she "had a delicious homesick spell."²⁶ Writing clearly acted as an outlet for these servicewomen to express that they were feeling homesick, letting their families know that they were missed and allowing themselves to admit that their wartime experience was not constantly as positive as propaganda and the media had portrayed it to be, without damaging morale.

While some servicewomen were comfortable directly stating they were homesick, they also recorded their homesickness in other ways. Sometimes asking for family members to send letters or packages, asking after or worrying over loved ones' well-being, or reminiscing about past interactions, were indicators that servicewomen were feeling homesick. In Chapter Two, letters brought servicewomen happiness, largely

²⁴ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, August 31, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 109.

²⁵ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, July 22, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

²⁶ Molly Lamb Bobak, "Horrible Fate of Innocent Private," August 8, 1943, "W110278" *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

because letters and packages alleviated homesickness by connecting them with their families and friend as well as reminding them that those at home were thinking of them.²⁷ Letters from home also served to keep servicewomen updated on the “minutiae of family and local life,” creating the feeling that they were still included in that world even if they were a country away.²⁸ Asking loved ones to write, or wishing that they wrote more often, was a common sign that women were missing home. Burgess made it clear in her diary several times that she wanted her friends and family to write more often, stating on July 20, 1943, “Gee! I wish I’d get more letters.”²⁹ Just two days later she writes the exact same sentence in her entry, this time adding that “It might help a little” with her homesickness and loneliness.³⁰ Similarly, Lamb drew the headline “Mail is a Great Comfort to Guppie” in her illustrated diary, demonstrating that she too considered mail comforting when feeling homesick.³¹ Servicewomen did not reserve their wishes for more letters to their diaries, they also directly told their loved ones in letters home that they wanted more as well. Drinkwater told her parents on many occasions to “write often” and “keep writing.”³² This is just one of the ways that servicewomen conveyed that they were feeling homesick without actually saying that they were. It should be noted that asking

²⁷ “Letter Writing in World War II,” *Smithsonian National Postal Museum*, accessed June 5, 2019, <https://postalmuseum.si.edu/VictoryMail/letter/index.html>.

²⁸ Helen B. McCartney, “The Links With Home: Communication Between the Home Front and the Fighting Front,” in *Citizen Soldiers: The Liverpool Territorials in the First World War*, 89-119 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 95.

²⁹ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, July 20, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

³⁰ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, July 22, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

³¹ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Mail is Great Comfort to Guppie,” December 21, 1942, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada. The term “guppie” referred to new recruits still in training.

³² Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to her parents, July 17, August 29, and September 14, 1943. *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 53, 66-7.

loved ones or friends to “write often” was recorded more frequently during women’s first few months in the service. As time went on, they became more used to their surroundings and formed friendships that helped them feel less alone and not miss home as much.

While they still thought of home often and wrote about it with a sense of nostalgia in their diaries and letters, the initial, more severe, ache of homesickness ebbed away with time as they started to become used to their surroundings. Even so, asking loved ones to write often demonstrates that the personal connections that servicewomen made or kept with those at home through letters was an effective way of combating negative emotions, such as homesickness.

Another way that servicewomen acknowledged in their letters and diaries that they were homesick was by reminiscing about past experiences. While this type of recording fits more closely with the current definition of nostalgia than homesickness, being nostalgic often implied that women were feeling homesick. For example, when Lamb was travelling on the train back to camp from Christmas celebrations in Montreal, she noted that, upon seeing the station at Pointe Claire, she “was filled with nostalgic feelings,” writing that it was due to “an old family album at home with pictures of the Lamb family of over twenty years ago – at this same Pointe Claire – and I had no idea I would ever be near the place!”³³ Another time, after being in the hospital at Hamilton for a few days due to an illness, Lamb was let out for the day to get some fresh air when she stumbled upon a market, in which she remarks “she got old feelings of fall in Vancouver, when the days drew in.”³⁴ For Burgess this feeling manifested while at home in

³³ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Wine for Lance-Jacks!,” February 6-13, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

³⁴ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Lamb Discovers Autumn in Hamilton!,” August 19, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

Vancouver on leave for Christmas, when she wrote in her diary “Gee it seems funny not to see everybody around town like we used to. When the war is over it sure will be grand to have everyone home again & get back to having fun together.”³⁵ These servicewomen found themselves in situations in which they were prompted to reflect back on past places or experiences that no longer existed. Historian Michael Roper argues that writing about nostalgia allowed service personnel to relate directly to a shared past with their family and friends, as well as “confess their wish to be home again.”³⁶ The way they wrote nostalgically also demonstrates how servicewomen were able to express their feelings without having to state that they were homesick, because they knew that doing so was not seen as conducive to keeping up morale within war time society.

“Girl has Tedious Job”: Boredom and Annoyance

Servicewomen realized that the work they were doing was crucial to the war effort, keeping the armed forces running smoothly and efficiently. Even so, it was not necessarily as interesting or exciting as advertising and media coverage had made it out to be. Due to the tedious or repetitive nature of some jobs, usually clerical work, many servicewomen experienced periods of boredom. Boredom can be classified into two forms, a type of “simple” boredom, sometimes deemed childish in nature; and a, deeper, second form of boredom that can affect a person more critically, leading to conditions such as melancholia or depression.³⁷ Historian Peter Toohey argues that simple boredom

³⁵ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, December 18, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

³⁶ Michael Roper, “Nostalgia as an Emotional Experience in the Great War,” *The Historical Journal* 5, no. 2 (June 2011): 426-7.

³⁷ Peter Toohey, *Boredom: A Lively History* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2011), 5.

is usually caused by “predictability, monotony, and confinement” as key components.³⁸ Toohey’s work acknowledges the work of American psychologist Robert Plutchik as well, who argues that boredom is a derivative of disgust in a “milder and more inward-turning manner” protecting humans from “‘infectious’ social situations: those that are confined, predictable, too samey for one’s sanity.”³⁹ He is describing, basically, situations that involved lots of repetition, leading to loss of interest and boredom, or states in which they experience reduced awareness.⁴⁰ This is the type of boredom recorded by the servicewomen studied. In this analysis, none of them showed signs of developing the second type of boredom. The boredom recorded in their letters and diaries more closely aligned with the first type of boredom, usually caused by monotony, predictability, or undesired confinement.⁴¹ While it is clear through their choice to enlist that servicewomen wanted to be a part of the service they entered, being posted to a remote station or placed in a tedious job contributed to experiencing simple boredom. This was because the jobs allocated for servicewomen were not very exciting, such as “clerking, cleaning, or cooking.” They were permitted to enlist specifically to take on what were labeled as traditionally female jobs, or extensions of jobs done by women in the home.⁴² This was to free men for more “exciting” and “important” work. A benefit of the nature of their work that helped to avoid the second, more severe, type of boredom was that it was tied to a greater meaning, namely the war effort. Toohey argues that if a situation is

³⁸ Toohey, *Boredom*, 4.

³⁹ Plutchik in Toohey, *Boredom*, 16.

⁴⁰ B. Maeland, P. Brunstad, *Enduring Military Boredom: From 1750 to the Present*, 9-65 (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 3.

⁴¹ Toohey, *Boredom*, 4.

⁴² Jeff Keshen, *Saints, Sinners, and Soldiers: Canada’s Second World War* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 179, Pierson, 109. Keshen notes that propaganda downplayed these jobs, presenting more glamorous jobs to women in order to make them more likely to enlist.

seen as “valueless” then boredom becomes worse, but if a task denoted as boring can be redeemed as valuable, or for a greater good, then it becomes more tolerable.⁴³ Because servicewomen were told that their work was crucial for helping win the war, it was given a greater value. This does not mean that their work was magically no longer boring, but it did mean that it may have been easier to endure.

The jobs that servicewomen were given were not usually as glamorous or exciting as advertisements had made them out to be. Recruitment propaganda, advertising, and media coverage all portrayed the work done in the services as exciting, but this was sometimes far from the truth. This omission was significant. The difference between expectations and the reality of service threatened the welfare of those who enlisted, both men and women.⁴⁴ Specifically, boredom often had a negative mental impact on those in service, “lowering morale and alertness.”⁴⁵ Often servicewomen’s jobs left a negative mental impact because they involved shifts of long, tedious work that was necessary to the operation of the services, but not fun or exciting for the women who had to endure it. Realizing that their work was an integral part of the war, servicewomen still did not hesitate to express their dissatisfaction with their current work in their diaries and letters. At first, servicewomen were optimistic that their roles would become more interesting in time. For example, Robson shared her frustration with her job overseas several times in her letters home to her parents. It is unclear what her job was when she arrived in London in November, 1942, but she initially wrote that “I have been busy

⁴³ Toohey, *Boredom*, 5.

⁴⁴ B. Maeland, P. Brunstad, *Enduring Military Boredom*, 24.

⁴⁵ B. Maeland, P. Brunstad, *Enduring Military Boredom*, 27.

learning the job. It isn't very interesting but I hope it picks up."⁴⁶ Women often vented their frustrations. Back in Canada, Lamb had recorded these frustrations about her own work. Lamb illustrated educational charts for training purposes, and entitled an article about her work as "Girl Has Tedious Job."⁴⁷ In the article she described her work as making her "cross-eyed."⁴⁸ Even though it was promised that their work would be new and exciting, it was not uncommon for servicewomen to take on boring or monotonous work while in the service, which contributed to lowered morale as servicewomen lost interest in, or started to resent, their jobs. This demonstrates that the primary cause for the negative feeling of boredom was the fact that servicewomen's jobs were not always the "Exciting Positions" promised to them as available by recruitment propaganda and the media.⁴⁹

Even though some of the work may not have been ideal, there were possibilities for promotion or a change of workplace that could pick up servicewomen's spirits and help fight boredom. After spending many months working at her tedious job creating educational guides as well as serving in the canteen in Hamilton, Lamb was given the opportunity to paint sets for the Royal Canadian Army Show. She demonstrated her excitement for this new job, and an unwillingness to return to her old boring job by rejecting any possibility of return. The CWAC had slated her to return within four weeks to Hamilton, even booking her a return train ticket. Lamb was convinced that she would

⁴⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, November 16, 1942, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 24. Many of the women overseas do not reveal their jobs directly to the recipients of their letters, most likely because it would have been considered sensitive information and would have been censored out.

⁴⁷ Molly Lamb Bobak, "Girl Has Tedious Job," December 13, 1943, "W110278" *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁴⁸ Lamb, "Girl Has Tedious Job."

⁴⁹ "Shoulder-to-shoulder for victory!" CWAC Recruitment, *Winnipeg Free Press*, April 17, 1943. Capitalization intentional.

not be returning, writing “I will...never return – NEVER!”⁵⁰ Similarly dissatisfied with her current work, Robson decided to take measures into her own hands. Robson’s work had evolved to typing technical details on chemical warfare, but she wrote her parents that she had acquired a new job because she “could not stand the old one any longer.”⁵¹ Robson worked up her courage and stated that she “went to the Colonel and told him I was being wasted and gave myself a good buildup (which for me was quite an effort).”⁵² Her efforts were rewarded and she was reposted to the Medical Branch. Although she noted that doing so lost her two months of promotion, she considered it “worth it.”⁵³ The work done by servicewomen was not always as glamorous or exciting as advertised. This was noted by servicewomen in their diaries and letters, showing their dissatisfaction with their work along with the willingness to find new positions that alleviated their boredom.

If boredom could not be helped, one way to offset its negative effects was to find hobbies outside of work. For example, during the First World War, soldiers often created ‘trench art’ from materials they found around them in order to alleviate boredom, stress, and fear.⁵⁴ While servicewomen were not under the same types of stressors that soldiers were, they also found occupations to relieve their boredom as well. A popular way to pass the time was by reading. When she was placed in the Hamilton Military Hospital due to an undisclosed illness, Lamb created the headline “Lamb Takes up Pen as Idleness Forces

⁵⁰ Molly Lamb Bobak, “Supplement of Farewell (With Dry Eyes),” February 1944, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵¹ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, January 3, 1943, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 32.

⁵² Robson, January 3, 1945, 32.

⁵³ Robson, January 3, 1945, 32.

⁵⁴ B. Maeland, P. Brunstad, *Enduring Military Boredom*, 27.

Bible Reading!”⁵⁵ Lamb had taken up reading the Bible to escape the boredom of her hospital stay. Although popular among the more religious servicewomen, the Bible was not the only thing that servicewomen read, especially if they could get magazines or newspapers sent to them from home. These items were less accessible for women serving overseas, but even in more remote stations in Canada it was hard to come by newspapers or magazines.

The desire for things to read is evident in servicewomen’s letters home. This is because reading magazines or newspapers was a simple way for servicewomen to alleviate their boredom.⁵⁶ For example, Drinkwater wrote to her parents many times while stationed overseas that she wanted them to send more newspapers and magazines. In one instance she notes, “The whole camp read the “funnies.” We love getting the magazines and newspapers from home,” in another, “The funny papers were received with open arms and are at present scattered in the five rooms on this floor.”⁵⁷ These types of material were welcomed and shared by all in order to try to pass the time, add humour to their situation, as well as allow them to receive broader news of life back home. Thanking individuals for sending magazines and newspapers was often followed by requests for them to send more. Drinkwater does this, stating in her letters, “please send some clippings from the “Globe and Mail”. You’ve no idea how wonderful it is to get them because we have no newspapers here except typewritten sheets made in the unit. They are boring and have no pictures” and “Please send some Canadian magazines. We miss them

⁵⁵ Molly Lamb Bobak, “That Bard is Writing Again!,” August 19, 1943, “W110278” *the Personal War Records of Private Lamb, M.* R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁵⁶ Edmund G.C. King, ““A Priceless Book to Have out Here”: Soldiers Reading Shakespeare in the First World War,” *Shakespeare* 10, no. 3 (2014): 232.

⁵⁷ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to her parents, May 23, 1944 and December 10, 1944, *Letters From Edgewood Farm*, 94, 136.

terribly.”⁵⁸ Canadian literature was specifically missed by those in service overseas, as shown through Drinkwater’s letters home. When they did receive it, it was shared amongst servicewomen so that they could all enjoy its content. In this way, reading materials from home had multiple functions. Not only did it alleviate boredom, but it kept women in touch with their former lives while forging bonds with those around them through the sharing of their materials.⁵⁹ This demonstrates how servicewomen were able to overcome negative emotions, such as boredom, through the personal connections they had with those at home and other servicewomen who shared methods of coping.

Besides experiencing boredom, many servicewomen also found themselves annoyed at times. The annoyance was usually caused by either their unhappiness with certain operations of the service, or by the living conditions in which the service placed them. This latter point was often true of those serving in Britain, where rationing, combined with a large population of stationed military personnel, led to congestion and line-ups that left servicewomen waiting. After the liberation of Paris, in the summer of 1944, Drinkwater wrote home and stated in the post-script that she found traveling around difficult due to the congestion of people on the platforms and difficulty obtaining a pass. She stated “Sometimes it takes 4 hours to go 40 miles. That is the picture of an average weekend, plus a ‘queue’ standing at least an hour to get a bus, or show, or cup of coffee. Ho hum, I’m tired of queuing.”⁶⁰ Here her annoyance was mixed with boredom, annoyed with the boring act of constantly having to wait in line for goods and services, or annoyed at the delay in train service. This was not an uncommon annoyance for servicewomen

⁵⁸ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letters to her parents, January 14, 1945 and June 23, 1945, while stationed overseas in Belgium, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 150, 211.

⁵⁹ King, “A Priceless Book to Have out Here,” 232.

⁶⁰ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, August 23, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 108.

stationed overseas, as cuts had been made to the British passenger rail system to accommodate for the movement of supplies at the same time that the number of passengers needing the trains rose.⁶¹ Robson also noted the dreadful “queue,” writing her parents that having just come back from dinner, “There was a very long queue and had to wait about half an hour before I got to the counter.”⁶² Waiting quickly became a part of daily life for servicewomen posted overseas, but this demonstrates that they were annoyed from time to time about doing so.

Just as effective in evoking annoyance in servicewomen were mistakes and inefficiencies within the service itself. Instances of lost records, misinformation, or delays often led to servicewomen feeling irritated. Recording these moments was a way for servicewomen to ‘let off steam’ without repercussions. For example, Hawkins was told that she had to have additional rounds of inoculations because the office in her RCAF basic training camp had no record of her previous injections.⁶³ Her records did eventually arrive, proving that she had already had been vaccinated, but she noted in her letter home, “too little and too late!”⁶⁴ Other times it was not the delay of records that was the issue, but the lateness or slowness of the service itself. After being posted from Toronto to Halifax, Hawkins experienced an eight-hour travel delay because she, among fourteen others, had been told the wrong departure time, writing “the whole performance was awfully silly – and typically military.”⁶⁵ Robson had a similar problem when her and her unit faced an inspection by Princess Mary while posted overseas, writing “We arrived an

⁶¹ Chris Sladen, “Holidays at Home in the Second World War,” *Journal of Contemporary History* 37, no. 1 (2002): 69.

⁶² Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, August 23, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 38.

⁶³ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, May 6, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 36-7.

⁶⁴ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, May 24, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 40.

⁶⁵ Mary Hawkins Buch, letter to Marion Strang, April 22, 1943, *Props on Her Sleeve*, 33.

hour ahead of time (CWAC officers have an obsession of being late),” noting that they had to stand in the rain until she arrived.⁶⁶ Issues with inefficiencies in the service were constantly endured by servicewomen, but they could not complain about these issues to their supervisors because they were simply accidents or seen as part of military life. Writing about them gave women outlets to express their annoyance without causing friction within their unit.

Sadness and Grief

When servicewomen experienced private sadness or grief, they did not often dwell on it in their letters and diaries for long. This could be because women believed that focusing on such negative emotions made them feel worse. It was also less selfish in the public mind. Discourse about proper public expressions of grief had changed during and in the decades after the First World War and this affected the way grief was expressed during the Second World War. This was a shift away from the rituals of the Victorian era, when a great deal of time and money had been spent on mourning practices in which women had been expected to “‘perform’ the cultural rituals of mourning.”⁶⁷ The massive death toll of the First World War meant this type of mourning was no longer seen as conducive to the war effort, or a war economy, because it was too costly and took away too many resources. Instead, there was a shift towards spending less on funerals and mourning, deeming over-extravagance on these occasions unnecessary, and even possibly harmful.⁶⁸ Women were increasingly expected to control their grief, replacing it with

⁶⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, September 6, 1943, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 68.

⁶⁷ Lucy Noakes, “Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain,” *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 8, 1 (2015): 74-5.

⁶⁸ Noakes, “Gender, Grief and Bereavement,” 76.

stoicism.⁶⁹ This was largely because outward expressions of personal grief and anguish were seen as both selfish and damaging to morale, in a way that might hurt the war effort as a whole.⁷⁰ Instead of spending their time and emotional energy on outward displays of grief, women were expected to put it into the war effort.⁷¹ This type of stoicism in the face of grief is mirrored in the letters and diaries of servicewomen.

Many of Canada's servicewomen experienced the loss of someone they knew during the war. This did not always mean that the loss was of someone they were particularly close to but may have been someone from their home community or who they had briefly met through their service. For example, Drinkwater often tried to keep tabs on the deaths of men from her community, Orillia, Ont. She was able to do so largely through information received from her parents when they learned of deaths through other community members or by reading casualty lists in the newspapers. Sometimes this could take a while, as a casualty report first had to be processed overseas before being dispatched to Ottawa, where it was delivered to the next of kin of the deceased before finally being printed in the newspaper.⁷² Although she tried to stay up to date with the deaths of people she knew, she also never dwelt on them in her letters home. In one instance she noted that she was sorry to learn about a soldier named Elton Dixon, who presumably was killed or severely injured while fighting overseas, although it is not stated in the letter specifically. Drinkwater wrote to her parents that "He was such a fine chap," hinting that something had happened to him, and that "you see a chap one day and

⁶⁹ Noakes, "Gender, Grief and Bereavement," 74.

⁷⁰ Noakes, "Gender, Grief and Bereavement," 78, 82.

⁷¹ Noakes, "Gender, Grief, and Bereavement," 82.

⁷² Timothy Balzar, "Canada's Roll of Honour: Controversy over the Casualty Notification and Publication during the Second World War," *Canadian Military History* 20, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 31.

the next he's in the thick of the action. But we must not dwell on that side too much, so will close now."⁷³ Here she is signalling that she is obviously upset about losing someone that she knew, sharing her sadness with her parents. Even though she does this, it is important that she very quickly turns the conversation around by stating "we must not dwell" because it was believed by many that this attitude not only made getting on with life easier, but also acknowledged that outward grief did nothing to help the war effort and harmed morale overall. She was experiencing the internalized pressure placed on women to "remain stoic" while emotionally suffering.⁷⁴ By stating "we must not dwell," Drinkwater remembered that there was a wider community dealing with grief as well, and that while her writing allowed her to recognize her pain and grief, she acknowledges her feelings must be dealt with privately so as to not harm morale.⁷⁵ Drinkwater carries this method of dealing with grief throughout her letters. After VE Day, in July of 1945, she ends a letter home with "I wonder where Lorne Christman was killed? Could you find where his 'plane was shot down?'"⁷⁶ To the reader this seems like a simple inquiry, no other mention of sadness, grief, or regret over his death is mentioned. Only in an explanatory note published alongside the letter is it revealed that Christman was a friend of Drinkwater's from Orillia, and that she had actually made a greater effort to track down and visit his grave, noting that after gaining a ride with some Germans, previously the enemy, "It made me mourn Lorne's death even more."⁷⁷ Despite her parents presumably knowing Christman, especially since they were the ones to write her of his

⁷³ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, March 24, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 90.

⁷⁴ Stephanie E. Butler, "The Circulation of Grief in English Women's World War II Correspondence," *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 42, no. 2 (September 2016): 53.

⁷⁵ Noakes, "Gender and Bereavement," 83.

⁷⁶ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, July 19, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 221.

⁷⁷ Catherine K. Drinkwater, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 221.

death, Drinkwater does not share her grief in her letters home, again demonstrating that she realized doing so was not acceptable.

Aside from these brief mentions in her letters, there are other ways to track Drinkwater's grief. There are several instances when she saved clipped out death notices of those she knew. It is unclear whether these clippings were saved for her by those at home, or if she saved them herself, but they are included alongside pictures she took and the letters she wrote. They were obviously important to her because she has penciled in under the clippings captions like "my first love" or "one of the best in our gang." Although these men are not mentioned in her letters, saving their death notices demonstrates that she mourned them to some degree, in private or after the war, when her emotions could no longer harm morale.⁷⁸ Drinkwater exemplifies how servicewomen internalized emotional policies of stoicism in response to grief during the war, realizing this reaction as the most acceptable way to contribute to the war effort.

Servicewomen also experienced less intense feelings of sadness in comparison to grief relating to death. Death was not the only cause of sadness, separation from friends they met in the service also produced melancholy feelings. As noted previously, when women enlisted they often left their homes for the first time, leaving behind friends and family. The loss of these relationships was often made up for by close friendships with other servicewomen, usually beginning in the basic training and carrying through to their individual postings. Recruitment advertising had specifically promised that this would happen, that women would meet new people and form close friendships. What it had not

⁷⁸ Catherin K. Drinkwater, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, See pages 51 and 216-7, there are multiple occasions in *Letters to Edgewood Farm* where Drinkwater has saved newspaper clippings of the death of soldiers that she knew.

mentioned was that the relationships that women formed were also often severed, as varied jobs postings placed them elsewhere. This caused issues when friendships that servicewomen had formed were broken up, as noted in diaries and letters. For some, like Lamb, friends leaving, or having to leave friends, was the primary cause for recording that she felt 'sad'. For example, after completing her basic training at Vermillion, AB, Lamb was shipped eastward. Upon her departure, the headline of her illustrated diary read "Heart Rending Scenes on Sunday! Fateful Day Brings Ghastly Parting for Lance-Corporal and Vermillion Friends. Moaning and Weeping as Train Pulls Out!," accompanied by illustrations that depicted Lamb embracing a friend with tears on her face and the caption "GOODBY [sic]."⁷⁹ This was not an uncommon reaction for Lamb, who recorded similar situations in which she stated "I hate to leave my friends" or she "sadly watches friends leave one by one."⁸⁰ Lamb was not alone in feeling sad when friends left, Hawkins also disliked being split up from her friends. While stationed in Halifax, NS, she wrote to Marion Strang that her friend 'Paddy' had been sent to Dartmouth, NS, temporarily, noting "it is a most unsatisfactory arrangement all around and I hate it," even though the friend was only moving a short distance away. Also recording sadness over friends leaving was Burgess, who stated in her diary that, after a section of her training comrades completed their time and left "we cried and were sad all day."⁸¹ Feeling sadness over leaving friends, or vice versa, was not reserved to a few

⁷⁹ Molly Lamb Bobak, "Heart Rending Scenes on Sunday," January 31-February 3, 1943, "*W110278*" the *Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸⁰ Molly Lamb Bobak, "Morale Marches On!" and "A Page of Celebration, Waiting, & Finally, Leaving," July 26, 1943, and May 19-22, "*W110278*" the *Personal War Records of Private Lamb*, M. R5336-20-1-E, Library and Archives Canada.

⁸¹ Joyce Burgess Erickson, personal diary, September 14, 1943, 20110109-016 58A 1 293.9, Canadian War Museum.

servicewomen. This was a universal issue that servicewomen dealt with and was simply part of their wartime experience.

Fear and Anxiety

In March of 1944, after being caught in the middle of an air raid while out in London, Robson wrote home to her parents that she and her male friend had taken shelter on some nearby house steps during the bombing, stating “I was so scared I was hanging like a leech onto George and he would have had to drag me by the hair before I could have left the step.”⁸² While the intensity of feeling fear, and its expression, varied for servicewomen, the height of it often occurred for those who experienced live bombing situations while stationed overseas. Although this fear as a reaction to enemy bombing attacks was common for those overseas, there were as many types of fear felt by servicewomen as there were servicewomen’s experiences. Those stationed in Canada still felt fear at times, but when they did it was often not related to a life-threatening situation.

Fear can be split into two broad categories for servicewomen during the war: the type of fear that they felt in potentially life-threatening situations, and less intense fear that applied to everyday situations. The first was basic fear, which caused actual physical effects to the body (heart-pounding, changes in blood pressure, trembling, etc.) and longer lasting psychological effects (constant fear or anxiety about those situations, or Post Traumatic Stress Disorder). The second type was a less intense form of fear that attached itself to everyday issues, such as a new job or missing a train.⁸³ While the two types of

⁸² Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, March 15, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 96.

⁸³ Joanna Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History* (Emeryville, Calif.: Shoemaker and Hoard. 2005), 7, Bourke makes the distinction that although there is no consistent physical reactions to fear, people can still “not escape physiological signs of terror” that occur when they are frightened.

fear differ greatly, with the second seeming more closely akin to anxiety than fear, experiences that fall within both are often described by servicewomen using the language of fear. As Joanna Bourke has written, as much as “discourse shapes bodies...bodies also shape discourse,” which leads to descriptions of people “weak or pale with fright” or “paralyzed with terror.”⁸⁴ Not only did servicewomen feel both types of fear, they also displayed them through their writings and actions, for example, as seen earlier in Robson’s letter where she “was so scared I was hanging like a leech.” Documenting their physical reactions in their letters and diaries allowed servicewomen to express their fears outside of the moment. In this way they were able to confide to their audiences the fear they felt, even if it did not match the bravery they were supposed to be feeling.⁸⁵

Fear and anxiety were felt by many servicewomen, but in vastly different ways. This was especially true based on where they were stationed. Even though it had been seen as the ideal placement, women overseas were put in situations that heightened their fear and anxiety. This was a difficult situation to be placed in because going overseas was at first a source of joy and excitement, which was quickly tempered with negative emotions as their experiences became less than pleasant. Many of the servicewomen placed overseas directly experienced German bombing raids. Initially bombing only affected those stationed in and around London, England, from when they arrived in 1942 until March of 1945. However, as the German forces were pushed back on the continent, Canadian support forces, including contingents of the Canadian Women’s Army Corps, were sent in. They also experienced enemy attacks while on the continent, hitting

⁸⁴ Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*, 8.

⁸⁵ Butler, “The Circulation of Grief in English Women’s World War II Correspondence,” 51.

prominent cities they were stationed in, like Antwerp, Belgium, in 1945. Although Canadian servicewomen were sent all over the continent, the CWAC in this study were only stationed in France and Belgium. Catherine Drinkwater and Kathleen Robson Roe were among those posted to these areas. Before being stationed in France or Belgium, fear and anxiety was first felt by those who were stationed in London, England. Catherine Drinkwater, Kathleen Robson Roe, and Mary Hawkins Buch were all stationed there at different times, Robson in 1942, and Drinkwater and Hawkins following in 1943. Leading up to the war, British government authorities had theorized that there would be a great deal of panic and fear if Britain was bombed, warning that if attacked, terrified civilians would lose all “humanitarian qualities and interests, becoming more bestial in behaviour than any other circumstances.”⁸⁶ Drawing on past experiences of the Great War and the Spanish Civil War, Britons in the 1930s started to recognize fear and anxiety as increasingly normalized legitimate reactions to total war.⁸⁷

Instead of the feared mass panic, maintaining a stoic attitude remained the socially acceptable response to the devastation caused by enemy air raids.⁸⁸ The response of fatalism also developed, or a “resigned state of mind.”⁸⁹ The idea here was that faith should be put in God, and that some things were uncontrollable, in the words of one young British woman, “if I am to die young, well there is nothing I can do to stop it.”⁹⁰ Canadian servicewomen involved in bombings overseas sometimes adopted this attitude,

⁸⁶ Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*.

⁸⁷ Michal Shapira, “The Psychological Study of Anxiety in the Era of the Second World War,” *20th Century British History* 24, 1 (2013): 34.

⁸⁸ See here Lucy Noakes, “Gender, Grief, and Bereavement in Second World War Britain,” *Journal of War and Culture Studies* 8, 1 (2015): 72-85.

⁸⁹ Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*.

⁹⁰ Bourke, *Fear: A Cultural History*.

most notably, Drinkwater. Describing narrowly escaping death after a theatre she was supposed to be attending was bombed while stationed in Belgium, Drinkwater mixed fatalism with religion in a letter home to her parents when she quoted a speech by King George VI. “We just put our hand in the hand of God,” explaining further that “I’m sure it wasn’t just luck. Perhaps we use that word lightly.”⁹¹ The attempt to alleviate fear and anxiety, in this case, was by recognizing that servicewomen had limited control over their safety, and ultimately God decided if their time had run out.

Another way of easing fear was through focusing not on oneself, but upon the dangers posed to the lives of their loved ones. Sometimes servicewomen were not even focused on their own fears or anxieties, but instead turned their attention to the fears and anxieties of their loved ones. Even though many servicewomen went through some very trying times, it is interesting to note that in their letters they downplayed worrying events in order to relieve their loved ones’ anxieties.

This instinct was supported by wartime authorities. Women were encouraged to write to soldiers during the war and were given advice on how to do so appropriately. The public was urged by the government to keep their letters to soldiers “cheerful and upbeat and to refrain from conveying any news that would weaken the soldier’s morale.”⁹² Servicewomen tried to do the same in their letters home, realizing that writing troubling information could likewise harm morale on the home-front. For example, Drinkwater had a tendency to wait to tell her parents about things she knew would worry them in the

⁹¹ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, January 7, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 143.

⁹² Judy Barrett Litoff and David Smith, eds., *Since You Went Away: World War II Letters from American Women on the Homefront* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991) in *The Columbia Documentary History of American Women Since 1941*, Harriet Sigeman, ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 65.

hopes of “saving” them from that worry. In one instance she wrote a letter home after she had been transferred to France, stating that “Maybe this will be a shock to you, but I thought it best to wait until I get there to tell you. It would save you from worrying about my going.”⁹³ Drinkwater does the same thing after the bombing she experienced in Belgium, writing that “We are out of the worst of it now and that is why I am writing. I did not want to write until it was all over. I knew it would make you nervous.”⁹⁴ She recognized that her place in the war made her vulnerable to dangerous situations. This meant that while she still felt the need to be honest with her parents about her experiences, she wanted to do so in a way that gave them the least amount of anxiety.

In the attempt to lessen their loved ones’ anxiety, servicewomen also downplayed terrifying experiences or “brushed them off”, so to speak, to make them seem less dangerous than they actually were. For example, Robson does this many times, writing down the details of certain bombings that happened while she was stationed in London followed by notes to her parents that they should not worry. On January 18, 1943, Robson wrote home about an air raid that had happened, describing the shrapnel from the bombs falling around her, only to sum up the letter with “Hope you are well and not alarmed over news of air raids: they are not as bad as they sound.”⁹⁵ After again and again describing raids where she and others had to be moved to the basement for shelter, or that trees had been completely uprooted, she sends messages such as: “However, there is nothing to be worried over and things are almost as normal as home” and “Don’t be

⁹³ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, September 29, 1944, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 119.

⁹⁴ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, January 7, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 143.

⁹⁵ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, January 18, 1943, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 36-7.

alarmed as it was at a distant location and all is well lately.”⁹⁶ These statements downplay servicewomen’s experiences, making them seem on the surface as not as afraid or anxious about bombing raids. This could make it difficult to analyze emotional response in these letters because women were trying to actively hide their true feelings. Luckily, Robson wrote letters to her sister, who she was more comfortable expressing her fear to. For example, on March 2, 1944, Robson tried to quell her sister’s worry about the bombing raids, stating “They never seem as close as they are,” but she also, revealingly, states that “I haven’t said too much about raids in letters home as I thought it might worry Mother and Dad.”⁹⁷ Here she felt comfortable about exposing what was happening to her sister in confidence because she knew that her sister would not tell her parents to avoid worrying them. This demonstrates that servicewomen felt fear and anxiety due to bombing raids, but when writing home they tried to make these events seem less serious in an effort to stop their loved ones from worrying.

Servicewomen tried to downplay the seriousness of bombing raids. Their feelings of fear and anxiety did not disappear when the danger was over, leaving servicewomen paranoid or otherwise affected by the conditions they had been placed in for months, or even years, while overseas. This was the point of enemy bombing raids, to try and reduce the opposing country’s production and fighting forces to a state where fear and anxiety rendered them useless.⁹⁸ Bombing raids may not have left personnel completely useless, but they did have long lasting effects on their mental well-being. For example, Robson recorded that, after witnessing rockets set off by British army groups in Belgium in

⁹⁶ Kathleen Robson Roe, letters to her parents, January 22, 1943 and March 13, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 38 and 95.

⁹⁷ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her sister, March 2, 1944, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 93.

⁹⁸ Shapira, “The Psychological Study of Anxiety in the Era of the Second World War,” 37.

celebration of VE Day, “One of the lads with us was down from the front and when the rockets went off he shook like a leaf – me too.”⁹⁹ Even through they were out of danger at this point, no longer experiencing air raids, Robson demonstrated that she, and the soldier, still felt fear and anxiety when the rockets were released because they were used to associating those feelings with the sound the rockets made. Physical reactions in the aftermath of bombings was not uncommon, London civilians had experienced similar symptoms after the Blitz, a period of devastating bombing strikes conducted by the Germans in 1940 and 1941. There are records of civilians uncontrollably weeping, shivering violently, and experiencing other uncontrollable behaviour.¹⁰⁰ This demonstrates that Robson was not alone in experiencing uncontrolled reactions to this issue. Drinkwater also had problems separating certain noises from emotional reactions after VE Day. Finishing up a letter to her parents in August of 1945, she wrote “Oh! There goes the air raid siren that they use as a signal to break off work. It’s on the building just next door and nearly scares me to death every time it goes. I guess we’re still not over our war time scare.”¹⁰¹ The meaning of the siren had changed, from signalling that an air raid was imminent to simply alerting servicewomen and men of break times. Still, the sound of the siren was associated in Drinkwater’s mind with raids, causing an initial reaction of feeling scared when it sounded. This demonstrates that certain experiences that servicewomen endured, such as air raids, while overseas clearly had lasting emotional effects.

⁹⁹ Kathleen Robson Roe, letter to her parents, May 11, 1945, *War Letters from the C.W.A.C.*, 156.

¹⁰⁰ Shapira, “The Psychological Study of Anxiety in the Era of the Second World War,” 42.

¹⁰¹ Catherine K. Drinkwater, letter to her parents, August 6, 1945, *Letters to Edgewood Farm*, 229.

Even though propaganda and the media had portrayed life in the services as ideal, there were multiple negative experiences that servicewomen had to endure. Many of these experiences caused them to have negative emotional reactions that impacted their morale. While some experiences were more harrowing than others, specifically those faced by women who experienced air raids while serving overseas, each servicewoman studied recorded some type of undesirable situation they had to endure. Usually the first negative was simple homesickness as they moved away from family and friends to undergo basic training, followed by boredom and annoyance as they were placed in jobs that were not as exciting as had been promised. This could be followed by sadness when they were separated by friends they had met in the service, or grief when they lost people to the war. Fear and anxiety were also experienced by many, but in a more serious manner by those who were stationed overseas, closer to the action. While most of the advertising and media coverage of servicewomen focused on the positive experiences that they would have, this was not always a reality of those who served. This, combined with the expectations that servicewomen were to control their emotions in the effort to maintain morale, made service-life difficult at times. In response, servicewomen did their best to find ways to maintain their positivity during negative situations, knowing that by not doing so it would affect the morale of those around them.

Conclusion

While there have been multiple studies that examined servicewomen's femininity, the maintenance of it, and the fears surrounding it, there has been little consideration of Canadian servicewomen's experiences especially in terms of how they were effected emotionally. This study argues that by examining the letters and diaries of Catherine K. Drinkwater, Kathleen Robson Roe, Molly Lane Bobak, Mary Hawkins Buch, Joyce Burgess Erickson, Rosemary Robb, and Eve Milne, it is possible to demonstrate that, even though many of the emotions and opportunities promised to women became a reality, only some of them were recorded by women with the same level of importance as had been placed on them in propaganda and media. Additionally, women were aware of what was emotionally required of them, and they actively worked to maintain morale, believing that keeping up the spirits of themselves and those around them was of utmost importance for the success of the war effort.

As argued in Chapter One, a great deal of time and effort was spent by the women's services in trying to manipulate and standardize women's emotions both before and after they enlisted. The majority of this effort was centered around trying to convince them to enlist, and then to maintain high morale, which was seen as integral to the war effort, and eventual victory. To do this, they targeted women's pride, excitement, and guilt, while downplaying feelings of homesickness or discontent. Three history of emotions frameworks help to understand how the services were able to create their own standards for how servicewomen should be acting. The first is the concept of "emotionology" by Peter N. and Carol Z. Stearns, outlining the standards that society maintains concerning emotions and their "appropriate expression," and ways that

“institutions reflect and encourage these attitudes.”¹ For example, one way that the services did this was by taking existing appropriate emotional standards, such as having pride in one’s country, and encouraging this attitude, claiming that the best way to demonstrate that pride was by enlisting.² The second framework that was useful to this study was Barbara Rosenwein’s “emotional communities.” Rosenwein defines emotional communities as being similar to other communities already operating in society, such as families or neighbourhoods, but with a specific focus on systems of feeling, where the communities evaluate emotions and regulate how they are expressed, defined, encouraged, or condemned within its confines.³ This is shown in the women’s services, which acted as one of these communities, with the focus on maintaining morale. To do this, the services encouraged factors that promoted positive emotions, such as friendships and job opportunities that elicited excitement, and condemned factors that caused negative emotions, such as homesickness. The third framework that can be applied to emotional manipulation efforts by the women’s services is William Reddy’s concept of “emotional regimes.” This method suggests that emotions can be socially learned by creating regimes that construct and direct rules and constraints.⁴ Once they had enlisted, service-produced training manuals and internal magazines helped to remind

¹ Peter N. Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, “Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards,” *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (Oct. 1985): 813.

² See here propaganda that promised feelings of pride to women who enlisted. For example, “Do you honestly believe you’re doing your full share?” *Brandon Daily Sun*, Brandon, MB. (October 26, 1943), combined pride with being “in the uniform of your country.”

³ Barbara H. Rosenwein, “Worrying about Emotions in History,” *The American Historical Review* 107, no. 3 (June 2002): 842.

⁴ See here William Reddy’s notion of “emotional regimes” in *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), xiii.

servicewomen how they should be feeling. For example, administration training manuals emphasized the importance of morale, defining it for servicewomen.

Chapter Two demonstrated that there was a disconnect between what was emphasized in propaganda and the media and what was emphasized by servicewomen in their diaries and letters. Often the services and media made gendered assumptions about what they thought would affect servicewomen's emotions and performances the most, such as the creation and regulations of uniforms.⁵ What they chose to emphasize tended to be based upon what they thought would motivate women, and they were often proved wrong. For example, as shown in this chapter, uniforms were not as important to women's morale as the standards of living accommodations. Although the emotional promises made to women in propaganda and the media did sometimes come true, such as the excitement that came from having new work opportunities, it was more often the smaller, everyday, events that were most significant in maintaining morale. The letters and diaries of the servicewomen studied demonstrated a different focus, tying their happiness more frequently to interesting experiences and to the personal connections they made with those around them, rather than material objects. In emphasizing and valuing these non-material aspects of life, these servicewomen were successful in creating a consistent positive atmosphere for themselves. This resulted in steadier levels of morale, and also shows the importance of women's agency in creating and controlling situations in which could feel more positive emotionally. They did this by creating friendships, exploring their surroundings, striving for promotions, entering into flirtations and

⁵ Tina Davidson, "'A Women's Right to Charm and Beauty' Maintaining the Feminine Ideal in the Canadian Women's Army Corps," *Atlantis* 6, no. 1 (Fall/Winter, 2001): 50.

romances with men, and trying to find better living accommodations when they could. Overall, maintaining a positive attitude was the main goal, not only for individual reasons but also because cheerfulness and productivity were visible indicators of their high morale.⁶

Chapter Three concluded that servicewomen experienced negative emotions at times. The reality was that their jobs were not always easy or pleasant, and sometimes they were placed in zones of conflict that caused feelings of fear or anxiety, which harmed their morale. The diaries and letters of Catherine K. Drinkwater, Mary Hawkins Buch, Molly Lamb Bobak, Joyce Burgess, and Kathleen Robson Roe in this section revealed that they all experienced negative emotions about their service at one time or another, or felt that they had to do something that was against their wishes, but realized that they had to overcome these emotions in order to maintain morale. The emphasis on high morale was stressed particularly for women, who were charged, by nature of their gender as well as wartime demand, with maintaining cheerfulness or stoicism. To perform in the way they were expected to, servicewomen relied on surface acting to a degree, so that their physical performances made them outwardly appear to be in high spirits.⁷ These women also demonstrated that they could work to change their own emotional situations through asking for new jobs, travelling, or venting to friends in order to bring up morale, suggesting that they had some agency in controlling their own emotional experiences.

⁶ Robert Mackay, *Half the Battle: Civilian Morale in Britain during the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), 3.

⁷ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983), 35.

The servicewomen examined in this thesis realized that negative emotions were harmful to morale and had to be avoided at all costs. The most effective factor that these servicewomen recorded as counteracting negative feelings was the personal connections that they made with those around them and maintained with those back home. The letters and diaries studied for this project are important here, because they acted as spaces where women could express themselves more intimately with their intended audiences. This was especially true of letters, which provided a space where women were able share emotions and gain support from home or their peers, undermining social expectations of stoicism.⁸ Forming friendship helped to dispel negative feelings as well; enlisted women used the shared bond of being in less than ideal situations together, such as working in bombing zones, to keep up each other's morale and make the best of their situation.

When considering the efforts of Canada's military services during the Second World War it is impossible to leave out the narratives of women who joined in terms of their emotional experiences. Allowed to join on the basis that they were freeing men to fight, servicewomen soon became integral to the services, ensuring their smooth operation on all levels. Whether on the home front or the front lines, emotions such as pride, excitement, love, fear, and grief, were central to their wartime life. Government propaganda, the media, and internal literature attempted to standardize many of these emotions. The women studied were aware of these standards and what was emotionally required of them, and they actively worked to maintain morale. In doing so, they

⁸ Stephanie E. Butler, "The Circulation of Grief in English Women's World War II Correspondence," *Concentric: Literary and Cultural Studies* 42, no. 2 (September 2016): 51.

recognized that keeping up the morale of themselves and those around them was of utmost importance for the success of the war effort.

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