

**LIVING THE CODE: HOW IDENTITY PRACTICES OF FEMALE CORRECTIONS
OFFICERS REINFORCE HEGEMONIC MASCULINITY IN THE OFFICER
SUBCULTURE**

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DEDICATION

To my husband, whose support has never waivered through the various manifestations of my identity. And to my children, who constantly inspire me to try and leave this world a little brighter, a little more accepting, and a little safer than I found it. Finally, to my brothers and sisters in blue, stay safe out there.

ABSTRACT

Despite this study occurring in the early years of the 21st century, women continue to face barriers to working in androcentric work environments. In the corrections environment, these barriers are further complicated by the hegemonic masculinity of the officer subculture and the prevalent stereotypes of women as weak, emotional, capricious, and incompetent. As a result, female officers adopt a variety of tactics and identity practices to gain acceptance into the officer subculture. This study examines the lived experiences of female corrections officers and explores the meaning they make of those lived experiences. In addition, Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices is applied to the lived experiences of female corrections officers, and findings indicate that this theory is applicable to the corrections environment. Furthermore, the identity practices utilized by female corrections officers reinforce and perpetuate hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture.

PREFACE

This thesis is a product of emotional labour, both that expended to create it and that expended to live the experiences that are shared and analyzed within it. I am deeply involved in this research, as both a participant and a researcher. One motivation for this project was the desire to contribute to improving the lived experiences of my fellow corrections officers. My personal connection to this research project has influenced some of my methodological choices, as well as contributed to a somewhat unconventional organizational framework. This preface will (hopefully) provide some guidance for the reader in navigating this somewhat unconventional format.

I chose to include autoethnography as one of the methods utilized in this project, because my personal lived experiences within the officer subculture provide concrete situations within which I can ground some of the theorizing done in this work. Autoethnography is meant to reflexively examine personal experience and the ways in which that experience connects to the wider cultural, political, and social meanings. In the case of this thesis, I also wanted to examine connections specifically between my experiences and the officer subculture within which those experiences occurred. Autoethnography is uniquely positioned as a method that incorporates emotion, uncertainty, and all the feelings that occur in the living of life, requiring the analysis of the ways in which these factors influence lived experiences. Given the importance of emotional labour and emotional dissonance in corrections work, I felt it necessary to choose a methodology that allowed for the examination, understanding, and processing of emotion. Rather than removing emotion in the pursuit of an elusive 'objective' truth, autoethnography acknowledges that emotion is integral to the truth of experience and is part of why 'truth' can be experienced differently by different people.

This thesis includes autoethnographic narratives that are set apart from the surrounding text with the following formatting:

Inset by use of a wide margin, and aligned in a justified manner. In addition, all autoethnographic narratives are typed in italicized font. This is the manner I have chosen to clearly delineate my personal stories from the experiences of my two participants.

However, there are many places in this thesis where I feel autoethnographic content is relevant, without including a specific, detailed autoethnographic narrative. Specifically, throughout my literature review I provide brief descriptions of my own experiences within the officer subculture, in order to link existing theory and previous research findings with my own lived experiences. In this rather unconventional way, I utilize autoethnography and the existing research to assist in analyzing my own experiences, while at the same time using my experiences to bring theoretical concepts or research findings to life. Where I do this in the literature review, the above formatting method is not used. Instead, I simply switch to the first person narrative for my experiences. I do not want to set these experiences apart from the information that has come before them and will come after them; I want these experiences to be entwined with the consideration of theory and previous research. On the other hand, the full autoethnographic narratives that I frame differently from the rest of the thesis (as outlined above) are intentionally set apart. These are intended to do the bulk of the emotional work, and they are framed in this specific manner to indicate their importance and their difference.

I want this thesis to accomplish something in addition to academic scholarship, theory expansion, and knowledge translation. I want to share with readers what it is really like to live and work in the world of corrections. I want to explore the specific ways this impacts female

officers, and in doing so amplify the voices of women in the industry which so often go unheard. I want to highlight, in a genuine and authentic manner, how harmful some aspects of the officer subculture can be. Ultimately, I want to incite change in the subculture, to improve the lived experiences of my sisters and brothers in blue. These goals are somewhat unconventional in academic scholarship, so to achieve them I chose a somewhat unconventional format. I hope my readers both enjoy and find value in this project.

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Thank you to Dr. Robert Wood, for being available to me whenever I needed assistance. Your organizational talents provided the guidance necessary to keep this project focused and running on time. I greatly appreciate your ongoing support, even when this project morphed into something quite different from that which I originally proposed. Your receptivity to new ideas and methods is inspiring.

Thank you to my thesis committee; each of you helped me in framing this project in the way it needed to be framed (even if I failed to recognize that need at first). Dr. Michelle Helstein provided straightforward and practical feedback during this project, without which I may have drifted more than a little off-topic. Dr. Jason Laurendeau workshopped my earliest efforts at autoethnography, providing both valuable direction and inspiration. Thank you both for your time and investment.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation to my participants, and acknowledge the courage they displayed in talking about these matters. The officer subculture is a closed culture, and sharing with outsiders is not encouraged. The fortitude demonstrated by Mel and Alli in their honest, emotional recounting of their lived experiences is to be honoured, and was motivated by their genuine desire to see improvements in the lived experiences of all corrections officers. I cannot explain the gratitude and respect I feel for both of you.

Finally, my family. My husband, who endured my absence from our family life with calm and support. My children; both the adult ones, who kept assuring me “you got this, mama” and the little ones, whose smiles and joy for life fill my heart. My sisters, who have always and forever believed in me more than I believe in myself. I love you all. And guess what? I got this!

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Introduction

Journal entry: Monday

I turn off the ignition, anxiously watching the rain sluice down the windshield of my old minivan. Obscured by the solid gray cloud cover that is producing this drenching downpour, I compulsively engage in my last-minute checks behind an elusive vestige of privacy. My short hair is neat and tidy – check; my glasses are clean – check; my face barren of make-up – check... yet still I worry that my appearance is not authoritative enough. I fear I am not going to fit in and I am scared to death of the environment I am about to enter. I try to adjust my uniform shirt, but, at three sizes too big, there is very little I can do to make it look professional. Add to that my uniform pants – too big in some places and too small in others, made as they are to fit a man's body, a body with no curves. I sigh. No matter how I try, by the time I reach the guardhouse through the beating rain, I am going to look like a slob. One more strike against me. So much for looking professional on my first day.

My thoughts shift. I remember stories of inmates attacking the 'weakest link', so to speak. In these stories, the implication was always that the 'weakest link' was a woman. There are so many things wrong with being a woman, it seems; inmates do not respect you, inmates will not listen to you, inmates will want to attack you... rape you. They will make lewd and suggestive comments to see how you react. What is the

right reaction? Too stern can make me a target, too soft can make me vulnerable... the other stories, the ones about female staff engaging in relationships with inmates, pop into my head and I immediately feel repulsed. I immediately classify those women as different from myself; they are clearly weak, lacking in self-respect, probably promiscuous, but I am none of those things. They are insecure; I am self-confident. They are inadequate; I am competent, skilled and qualified. I continue in this vein, trying to prepare myself mentally for the day, as I exit my old minivan and jog through the rain: "You are fully trained. You completed training in the top quarter of your class. You know the law, you know the policy. You are 32 years old, not some young kid who has to borrow confidence from his uniform. You will be fine." If only I believed myself!

I stand outside the gate, waiting for the officer in the control post to open it. We had been warned – whatever you do, do not press the buzzer beside the gate! Never mind that its sole purpose is to notify the bubble officer that someone is waiting to enter. That little buzzer is for visitors – civilians – and any officer who pushes it, ignorantly expecting a quick response, is doomed to wait for all eternity (or at least two or three times longer than necessary). So I stand there, rain dripping off the end of my nose and sneaking under my collar to drip down my back, glasses so wet and foggy I can barely see. Clearly any hope of a quick

entrance is completely futile; I am destined to start my first day on the job looking like a drowned rat.

Eventually, the gate slowly slides open. I enter the guardhouse, stopping at the control post to present my ID. The officer takes my ID and smirks at me. He turns to share my ID with an officer sitting behind him. That officer looks at me with an expression lacking any sign of welcome or camaraderie. His look is so cold and expressionless that I feel a chill down my spine, one that is completely unrelated to the cold rain still dripping from my short hair, sliding under my collar, and slowly trickling down my back. That look says, "your kind is not welcome here." Then the first officer says something I can't hear through the Plexiglas, and the second officer's face suddenly breaks into a smile. I have a brief moment of hope – maybe he just realized I am one of the new officers here, at this facility, and he is going to offer a welcome? Followed quickly by humiliation, as he starts laughing. Laughing in such a contemptuous and derisive way, that I know whatever was said is about me. I am thoroughly degraded and completely dismissed, less than five minutes after stepping into my new workplace. What have I set myself up for?

My face burns, showing my embarrassment as I blush furiously. I have always blushed easily, even when I am not embarrassed; it is a curse of such fair skin. It has always bothered me, but in this situation it was mortifying... and the more embarrassed I am, the darker I flush. I tell

myself this is just part of the initiation – all new officers have to go through it. It has nothing to do with the fact that I am a woman, that I am only 5’2” tall, that they think I am small and weak and incompetent. I don’t believe myself, though; and when the bubble officer eventually tosses my ID through the cut-out in the glass, speaking to me not at all but very obviously looking me up and down, I believe myself even less. It sure feels like this has to do with the fact that I am a woman. He immediately turns his back on me, and I meekly pick up my ID, face still burning. I turn to approach the x-ray machine, which would scan my backpack for contraband.

“Hey, stupid!” shouts the officer in the control post. I immediately whirl around, face (which had barely begun to cool off) instantly red as a tomato, wondering what I could possibly have screwed up already. It turns out the officer is talking to someone who came in behind me...but everyone sure notices that I immediately responded to “hey, stupid”, and laughter fills the guardhouse. I can feel sweat starting on my palms and in my underarms... I have flashbacks to grade eight when I would hear taunts of “Jami don’t walk right” as I walked down the hall, causing my stomach to tighten in knots. I force myself to turn back to the x-ray machine, placing my backpack on the belt.

“First day?” the officer behind the counter asks softly; so softly, I can barely hear her. “Ignore those idiots.” Then, in a stern and much louder voice, “empty your pockets into the basket, then walk through

the metal detector. Once you are cleared, pick up your stuff and wait over there with the other rookies.”

Myself and the other new officers from my training group are eventually collected, like a ragtag group of stray puppies, by the shift supervisor. While there is nothing warm about him, at least he just seems brisk and efficient rather than cold and hostile. I begin to relax as my classmates and I joke around, falling into the friendly patterns of camaraderie that had been encouraged to flourish throughout our training. This is more like it, I think to myself. This is the solidarity I expected, that feeling of fellowship, of belonging and support. I trust these people to have my back; we will learn our new roles communally, helping each other with mutual respect and a genuine desire to for all of us to succeed.

As we leave the guardhouse, the first of a double pair of gates slowly slides open. Once we are all in the no-man’s land between the two gates, the one we had just passed through slams shut. I had toured the institution previously; this was not the first time I heard the distinctive clang of prison gates. But this time was different. The grinding of the gate moving along its track pulls my full attention; time stretches out as that gate slides shut. The clang of its final closure makes me jump inside, while my outward response is carefully and strictly maintained – professional and blank. At least, I hope that is what my outward

appearance is showing. The second gate slides open and we step through.

This time, it seems to take only seconds for that gate to slide shut. The clang of metal hitting metal as that gate slams home hits me physically. I feel a large weight settle upon my shoulders, but I force myself to stand straighter and bear its burden. My stomach heaves and aches, tying itself in knots as my conscious brain realizes the finality that slam represented. I am in prison... imprisoned. No matter that I wear a uniform, I am an officer – one of the good guys! I am still locked in a place that no sane human would enter voluntarily. Can I turn around right there, before taking another step into that pit of darkness? Sure, but that won't get me out of this place. Can I run at the gate, screaming "let me out! I quit!"? Sure... but unless that control post officer – the one who doesn't seem to see me as a human being – chooses to let me out, I cannot leave. I... can... not... leave. My brain latches onto that phrase and begins jabbering in distress. My mind fills with the horrors that await me in this place... the fights, the overdoses, the stabbings, the rapes... all the horrors we have been prepared to avoid or suppress in our training. I take a deep, shaky breath, and force myself to step forward. I focus on my feet, one in front of the other. My time as a youth in cadets returns, and I focus on a marching chant... "left, right, left" ... in order to quell some of the terror. Resolutely, those marching steps carry me forward... to face my first day on the job.

Project Introduction

In this study, I am investigating hegemonic masculinity and the identity practices of female corrections officers in the Canadian corrections system. While I initially commenced this project with three interrelated research questions in mind, this changed as the project grew and transformed. I have detailed this process of growth in the methodology section of this paper, in order to provide context to both the methods and findings of this study. In the end, the research questions I am exploring with this study are: *how does the officer subculture influence the identity practices of female officers in both their working and non-working lives? And how do these identity practices reinforce hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture?* I have three participants in total, including myself, and all are (or have been) female corrections officers. This study will explore the lived experiences of these women as officers, focusing on their experiences with the officer subculture. In addition, the theory of identity practices proposed by Sasson-Levy (2003) will be applied to the lived experiences of my participants, to determine the relevance of this theory in the Canadian correctional context. Retrospective journal entries are threaded throughout this paper to share my personal experiences and highlight my standpoint, using evocative narrative autoethnography. The format used for the journal entries was chosen to make the autoethnographic components of this project easily identifiable as my experience, rather than that of my participants.

My career in corrections inspired this study. I have worked in the industry for more than 14 years in a number of different correctional environments, and I have observed officers verbalizing and enacting similar values, attitudes, and beliefs across a variety of locations. These values, attitudes and beliefs are components of the officer subculture, which grows out of the duties, tasks, and environments of the everyday work in corrections. (Burdett, Gouliquer, &

Poulin, 2018; Crank, 1998; Ricciardelli, 2017). As a new, and admittedly naïve, correctional officer, I entered an entirely different world when I first walked through the gates of an institution. As described in the above journal entry, this world has its own rules and exists within a confined environment over which I have little control. From the moment I walked through those gates wearing that uniform, I was learning an entirely new culture – one with its own expectations and taboos, alliances and divisions, ceremonies and rituals.

My experiences within the officer subculture were directly impacted by a number of factors specific to me and my life; I was in my early thirties before I entered the industry, I was female, I had a bachelor degree in sociology, I was married with children, and so on. I could say the same for each of my colleagues, as we all lived full and varied lives before entering the industry. For these reasons, I fully expected each experience to be different, to be unique in some way. What I observed over the years was a startling number of similarities based largely along gender lines. I spoke to other female officers and heard stories that contained the same basic elements as my own, elements that all revolved around gender and sex and stereotypes.

I have also seen women leaving the industry, beaten and weary or angry and resentful, while at the same time eager, optimistic women enter it. I have seen those optimistic new recruits become weary, cynical, and jaded over the years. I have seen myself: in the beginning, optimistic and wanting only to help, to believe the best of others, to believe in the possibility of change; over the years, pessimistic and feeling helpless and judged, unable to believe the best of others as I have consistently seen the worst, struggling to believe in change when faced with stagnation. I have chosen to fight back by engaging my colleagues in critically examining the subculture to which we all belong. This thesis project was born of the desire to create a better world for my corrections family and myself.

Barriers exist for women in all androcentric work environments (Bolton & Muzio, 2007; Canada, 1990; McMahon, 1999; Tyler & Cohen, 2010; Worrall, Harris, Stewart, Thomas, & McDermott, 2010). These barriers are written into policy, demonstrated through organizational practices, even enacted through organizational cultures. In the corrections industry, barriers to women have existed in all of these places at different points in time (Canada, 1990; McMahon, 1999). I have chosen to examine the officer subculture, both to identify such barriers and to investigate how women navigate them. This is a highly personal matter to me, as I have spent so much of my life trying to navigate these issues. I continue to run into the same old barriers. I am tired of this, exhausted with having to justify my presence, my expertise, and my opinions despite my extensive experience. Instead of allowing this exhaustion to create apathy, to make me give up, I choose to use this exhaustion as motivation to help create change.

The corrections industry is paramilitary in nature, organizing officers by rank and requiring them to follow a chain of command. As such, it has a great deal in common with other paramilitary and military industries, such as policing, fire fighting, first responders, and the military. For this reason, similarities exist in the occupational cultures between policing, military, and corrections. Orna Sasson-Levy (2003) conducted a study into the experiences of female soldiers filling traditionally male roles within the Israeli military. She identified three categories of identity practices used by these women to gain acceptance into the androcentric subculture of operational military service. In reviewing her findings, I saw these same identity practices reflected in my own behaviour throughout my career. I interviewed two female corrections officers regarding their lived experiences of gender in the workplace to determine if they too utilize these identity practices. I further analyzed my own lived experience, sharing it as openly as possible through the use of autoethnography. I will thoroughly explore the lived

experiences of all three participants in this project and analyze the connections between our individual lived experiences and the officer subculture. While I will not generalize to the entire population of female corrections officers, I will identify some themes common to the three lived experiences I am studying. I will discuss areas that require further research, as well as any recommendations that arise, with the goal of improving the lived experiences of female corrections officers.

Literature Review

Every human being experiences the world differently, and their identified location on the gender spectrum influences their individual experiences. Even a choice to not identify anywhere on the spectrum will affect one's experience of the world around them. This is equally true in the workplace.

Androcentric Work Environments and the Barriers Faced by Women

Androcentric work environments, or work environments that are male-dominated, interact with gender in specific ways. While working roles were once clearly divided along gender lines, those lines have been blurring for decades (Brym, Roberts, Stroschein, & Lie, 2016). Women have been entering traditionally male dominated jobs such as construction, policing, and investment banking, and men have begun to explore traditionally female jobs like teaching and nursing (Brym et al., 2016; N. R. Jurik & Halemba, 1984; McMahan, 1999; Prokos & Padavic, 2002). However, there remain a number of largely androcentric work environments, including paramilitary jobs such as policing or corrections, wherein there remains significant hostility toward women (Burdett et al., 2018; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; McMahan, 1999; Ricciardelli, 2017; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Weitz, 2015). Inequality regimes, defined by Joan Acker (2006) as “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within particular organizations”, are notably present within all organizations to a greater or lesser degree (p. 443). Within paramilitary organizations, gender-based inequality regimes are predominant and hostility toward women is evident (Acker, 2006; Burdett et al., 2018; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Ricciardelli, 2017).

Burdett et al. (2018) have identified various barriers that exist for women in androcentric work environments, including the “double standards of performance, the old boys’ club, occupational socialization, and the devaluing of feminine traits” (p. 330). Of note, *Beneath the Veneer: The Report from the Task Force on Barriers to Women in the Public Service* identified these same barriers in 1990 (Canada, 1990). Beginning with double standards, women working in androcentric environments often have to perform at a level greater than their male counterparts to be seen as competent (Canada, 1990). That is, while their male colleagues are permitted to be better at certain aspects of the job and worse at others, women in these environments are required to demonstrate near perfection in order to avoid being identified as feminine and thus incapable (Canada, 1990; Gouliquer, 2011). In my experience in the corrections industry, this is easily observable. It is generally accepted that men are better at some aspects of the job (usually those requiring physical strength and prowess) and worse at others (such as written communication or counselling offenders). On the other hand, failure to be both counsellor *and* enforcer, writer *and* intimidator often results in women being criticized and judged incompetent.

The old boys’ club refers to a corporate culture wherein gendered attitudes are prevalent and the employees – mostly men – believe that women are suited to feminine jobs and certainly not to the work they themselves are performing (Canada, 1990). These attitudes and beliefs are not only evident in rules and regulations, but also in “informal structures and codes of acceptable behaviour” (Canada, 1990, v.1, p.174). These attitudes and beliefs can effectively separate men and women both physically and psychologically, in masculine after-work activities and masculine viewpoints (Canada 1990). Some women choose to modify their behaviour and viewpoints to fit with masculine expectations in hopes of breaking down these barriers and gaining acceptance – which often leads to them being perceived as “a little too masculine in

[their] approach” (Canada, 1990, v.1, p. 75). However, if women maintain their own activities and viewpoints, they remain on the outside looking in. Furthermore, as important deals may be struck and decisions made during extra-curricular masculine activities, maintaining their own activities and viewpoints may well cost women career advancement and inclusion (Canada, 1990).

I entered the corrections industry as a woman with short hair. I had worn a ‘pixie cut’ for a few years and enjoyed the ease of it. That short hair was one of the first things many of my male colleagues commented on, in a look-at-that-hair-she-must-be-a-dyke kind of way. However, I also heard these same men make negative comments about female officers with mid-length to long hair. If these women wore their hair unbound, male officers would comment that it was a security risk and they should be forced to wear it up or cut it off. Comments like ‘who is she trying to look good for in here anyway?’ were common, indicating the perception that women’s choice of hairstyle is solely based on pleasing men. However, the solution to this dilemma was not to wear your hair longer and up in a bun, because doing that led to endless comments about librarians and women in x-rated movies. There was really no way to win: short hair was too masculine; long, bound hair meant you were superficially frigid, waiting for a man to come along and fix that; and unbound hair identified you as too sexy, obviously promiscuous, and at risk of sleeping with inmates. This is an example of the dilemma women experience when trying to decide just how to be masculine without being too masculine.

Occupational socialization occurs in every workplace; it entails learning behavioural norms and expectations as well as the predominant values and attitudes of the workplace (R. Connell, 2008; Scott, 2014). Within the correctional environment, this means learning how to interact with both offenders and colleagues/superiors. Studies have shown that values, attitudes,

and behaviour expectations often differ between men's and women's institutions, resulting in the differential socialization of officers based on the gender of the offender they are supervising (Crouch & Alpert, 1982). There are significant differences in attitudes toward punishment and aggression between men's and women's institutions, with those socialized within a men's institution emphasizing punishment and aggression in their work (Crouch & Alpert, 1982). When women first started working in corrections in Canada, they were only permitted to work in women's institutions (McMahon, 1999). Women did not begin to fill the role of officer in men's institutions until the mid to late 1970s, at which point they began to enter these roles as a significant minority (McMahon, 1999). Women in men's institutions were faced with the attitudes, values, and beliefs predominant among the male officers in these facilities; however, they were not equally socialized into their work environment. Women were not welcome and therefore were not included; they were not taught the nuances of the organizational culture, the unspoken rules, the expectations of the officer subculture. Resistance to women filling these roles often left women officers both inadequately trained and inadequately socialized (Crouch & Alpert, 1982; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; McMahon, 1999).

Journal Entry: Wednesday

Day three of my on the job training, and I am overwhelmed and completely unsure of myself. I have filled my little notebook more than half-full already with notes on how to work the few posts I've been trained on. When my notebook is full, what do I do? How do I get a new one? I will wait to ask that question, I have enough to ask for now.

It is a warm spring day that should be pleasant, but I feel only anxiety as I approach my assigned unit. Stepping inside I head directly to the control post door, where I stand outside the gun port quietly waiting until the officers inside finish their conversation. One officer is an older man with white hair, the other is a younger man; maybe around my age. My hands are already sweating and neither of the officers in the control post have even acknowledged my arrival. I have to get this nervousness under control!

Finally, both officers turn to face the gun port. I reach my hand out, waiting for the key to be passed through the gun port so I can gain entry to the exterior of the two doors barring entrance to the control post. The older officer just stands there, looking at me with his arms crossed over his chest. My stomach clenches; this is clearly going to be one of those posts where I am not entirely welcome. I still stand with my hand out however; he has to let me in, I have to learn this post. This is my assigned post for the morning; he can't just refuse me entry. Can he?

It turns out he can. He stares at me another few seconds, then gives a very slow and deliberate shake of his head: left, right, and back to centre, while glaring at me. He then turns his body away from me, presenting me with his back as he watches the tier opposite to where I am standing. The second officer calls through the gun port, directing me to another unit. I turn to leave, my

stomach sinking as I realize a number of inmates have witnessed my rejection. Do they also believe I am not competent for this work?

I arrive at the alternate unit and see the officer who directed me here. He says, "just ignore Officer X. He's old school, doesn't work well with women. He refuses to talk to any of them until they have at least two years in uniform." I feel myself shrink as I realize the sentence I have been given... two years to even be acknowledged as a human being? How am I to learn my job if the officers with the most experience refuse to teach me? I begin to feel the first stirrings of anger in my belly, but mostly, I just feel embarrassed, humiliated, and useless.

As the above journal entry makes obvious, both my training and socialization were inadequate. I was partially trained at best, and my most frequently used method of learning was trial and error resulting in a number of mistakes. Mistakes I could have avoided if only I had been taught the duties and tasks associated to that particular post. Socialization consisted of silently putting up with all the snide comments, sexist jokes, and sexual innuendo (or blatant suggestiveness) that was regularly served by many of my male colleagues. This behaviour systematically desensitized me to ideas and discursive acts that would have normally offended me and provoked a reaction. By the time I eventually figured out what type of response would see me accepted into the subculture, I no longer saw these ideas and discursive acts as particularly problematic. I had begun to accept them as normal. It is important to note that this was not the case with every male officer; many did not engage directly in these behaviours.

However, while those who did so were the minority, the silence of the majority screamed collusion louder than words.

Finally, the devaluing of traits traditionally viewed as feminine is both a barrier to women working in androcentric environments as well as a significant component of the officer subculture. A wide variety of traits have been identified as feminine and therefore associated to women, and virtually all of them are seen as inferior when compared to the corresponding male trait: women are weak, men are strong; women are emotional, men are reserved; women are pleasant and polite while men are socially powerful and assertive (Gouliquer, 2011). As noted above, men's institutions have been occupationally socialized in such a way as to value traditionally masculine traits (Crouch & Alpert, 1982; McMahon, 1999). This results in both stereotypical assumptions that women embody feminine traits – incompetent, weak, and emotional – and the firm belief that these traits are not only ineffective but also downright dangerous in the androcentric work environment (Martin & Barnard, 2013; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Ricciardelli, 2017; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Weitz, 2015). The devaluing of such traits is a rather natural progression from this starting point.

Masculinity and Femininity within Patriarchal Society

In order to understand this tendency to devalue traits identified as feminine, it is necessary to explore the concepts of masculinity and femininity within the context of patriarchal society. The literal meaning of patriarchy is “rule of the father”, and the term was initially used to describe social systems wherein the father was the head of family and household (Scott, 2014). Over time the term has come to refer to male domination in relation to virtually all social systems: in the family, in the economic system, and in the political system (Scott, 2014). Patriarchy allocates power and dominance to men; under this system, women are supposed to be

submissive and subordinate. This is a general, overarching statement and it is important to recognize that factors such as race, class, and sexual identity also influence the particular male-female power dynamic in any given relationship. This study is taking a phenomenological approach, in that the goal is to gather data from female corrections officers as to their specific lived experiences and what meaning those experiences hold for them. The data that comes out of this study may indicate that issues of race, class, and sexuality are particularly relevant to the lived experiences of female corrections officers. If so, that will direct future research to examine the intersection of race/class/sexuality with gender among women working in corrections.

Within the patriarchal system that exists in Canada, men and women go about their day believing they have freedom of choice to direct their own lives. However, this freedom to choose is not so free as we like to imagine. There are certain beliefs and expectations based on gender that impact the choices we make. Classic ideals of masculinity and femininity impact decisions about work, about family life, about roles and relationships (Mackie, 1991; Salamon & Robinson, 1987). There is a reason that the conceptualization of ‘women’s work’ exists (Britton, 2000; Mackie, 1991; Salamon & Robinson, 1987). The idea that some jobs are masculine (law enforcement, military, business executives, construction trades, etc.) and some are feminine (nursing, teaching, cleaning, childcare, etc.) is widespread throughout capitalist, patriarchal societies (Mackie, 1991; McMahon, 1999; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Ricciardelli, 2017; Salamon & Robinson, 1987; Weitz, 2015). Those jobs traditionally considered feminine tend to be nurturing roles that involve caretaking in some form; furthermore, such jobs have traditionally been unpaid or minimally paid in capitalist societies (Canada, 1990; Mackie, 1991; Salamon & Robinson, 1987). In capitalist societies, wealth accumulation is associated to power and prestige, with higher paying jobs considered prestigious and the people holding those positions

having considerable power (Mackie, 1991). These jobs have traditionally been filled by men, and at the highest ranks (executive levels of management in business or government) continue to be dominated by men (R. Connell, 2008; Ng & Sears, 2017). In addition, jobs that involve a degree of personal risk or danger also continue to be dominated by men (Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Sasson-Levy, 2003; Weitz, 2015; Yu, 2015).

Hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic femininity, and pariah femininities.

The concept of hegemony comes from work done in the area of class relations by philosopher and politician Antonio Gramsci. The term refers to the way in which a particular group gains dominance and authority over others in social and cultural life (R. W. Connell, 1995; Scott, 2014). The concept of hegemonic masculinity, then, refers to the way in which a particular form of masculinity ascends to the pinnacle of the social ladder and is glorified as the most desirable form of masculinity (R. W. Connell, 1987, 1995; R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). While at any given time within a particular culture and class there will be a specific masculinity that is hegemonic, the specific masculinity will not always be the same.

According to Connell (1995):

At any given time, one form of masculinity rather than others is culturally exalted. Hegemonic masculinity can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women (p. 77).

It is important to note that Connell (1995) does not label specific behaviours, or any one form of masculinity, as hegemonic. This is because the form of masculinity that is hegemonic today may well be different ten years from now. The concept simply relates that, of the multiple forms of masculinity that exist, one will be “culturally exalted” and its associated traits and behaviours will be held up as goals for boys and young men within that culture (Connell, 1995, p.77). Those

associated traits and behaviours will necessarily be distinctly masculine and withheld from women, thereby affirming the superiority of men.

Hegemonic masculinity does not gain its power and authority through violence; nor does every male who benefits from patriarchy fit the ideal of hegemonic masculinity (R. W. Connell, 1995; R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is far more likely that most men only perform a few of the behaviours or demonstrate a few of the traits that signify the hegemonic form of masculinity; however, by virtue of those few traits and being male, there is some authority bestowed upon them. This does not mean that such authority is never reinforced with violence; rather, that violence is not a *requirement* of hegemony (R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005).

Subordination occurs when other forms of masculinity (as well as femininity, but we will revisit that later) are subordinated to hegemonic masculinity. The most obvious example is the subordination of homosexual masculinity to heterosexual masculinity, which can be seen throughout contemporary society (Anderson, 2002; R. W. Connell, 1995; R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Johnston & Kilty, 2015). While the LGBTQ2S+ community is gaining acceptance daily, the fact is that homosexual men are widely positioned as less valuable and less capable than heterosexual men (Brym et al., 2016; R. W. Connell, 1987; Johnston & Kilty, 2015). However, other forms of masculinity are also regularly subordinated and the character traits and behaviours associated to these forms are denigrated (the ‘metrosexual’, the artist, the ‘pretty boy’, for example). Depending where these masculinities exist in the social hierarchy, they will suffer more or less by their comparison with hegemonic masculinity (Johnston & Kilty, 2015).

As previously noted, most men do not “rigorously practi[ce] the hegemonic pattern in its entirety”; rather, most men embody only a few of these exalted character traits (Connell, 1995, p.

79). Even those in subordinated groups – homosexual males, for example – may exhibit one or more of these traits. Thus, while subordinate to heterosexual males, they remain dominant over women (Johnston & Kilty, 2015). Therefore, all men “benefit from the patriarchal dividend” to one degree or another through the advantage they gain simply by being male rather than female (Connell, 1995, p. 79). Connell (2005) compares these men to football fans as opposed to football players; passive consumers of the sport, rather than active participants. Regardless, both the player and the spectator are engaging in hegemonic masculinity and benefitting from doing so.

Masculinity dominates femininity, and hegemonic masculinity dominates other forms of masculinity (R. W. Connell, 1995; R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Johnston & Kilty, 2015). There are numerous forms of femininity as well; and, while all are subordinate to masculinity, there remains a social hierarchy with regard to femininity. Connell (1987) identifies emphasized femininity as a form of femininity that is grounded in subordination and centered on developing and valuing the characteristics that are of value to men, such as vulnerability, fragility, desiring marriage, being sexually receptive, and becoming a mother (p. 188; Finley, 2010, p. 361). The specific traits just identified are context-dependent; if the specifics of hegemonic masculinity change, so will these traits. The key is the complimentary and supportive relationship between the traits exemplified in hegemonic masculinity and the complimentary traits valued in emphasized femininity. The traits, words, and behaviours that are considered desirable by men confer a certain amount of power on the women who enact them (Mattsson, 2015). While there is a certain amount of power to be found in emphasized femininity, it can never challenge the gender status quo as it is a power that is based on the subordination of women and the dominance of men (R. W. Connell, 1987). In this sense, Connell (1987) states, it

cannot be hegemonic. A number of scholars disagree, preferring the term ‘hegemonic femininity’ to ‘emphasized femininity’, noting that this form of femininity “legitimizes a hierarchical and complimentary relationship with hegemonic masculinity and thus sustains the current gender order” (Finley, 2010, p. 361). Connell chose not to utilize the term ‘hegemonic femininity’ to avoid giving this type of femininity the power held by hegemonic masculinity; this type of femininity can never become socially ascendant under patriarchy as it is still a form of femininity and therefore always subordinate to masculinity.

Schippers (2007) notes that hegemonic femininity is in fact ascendant over other forms of femininity, and this ascendancy makes it hegemonic. Hegemonic femininity gets its power from enacting the characteristics and behaviours that are attributed to one-half of the idealized gender relationship between men and women. Schippers (2007) defined hegemonic femininity as “the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complimentary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 94). This definition not only compliments Connell’s (1987) concept of emphasized femininity, it allows for the study of other femininities in the social order. Hegemonic femininity is the culturally exalted form of femininity; just look at the idealization of motherhood that continues in modern society (Finley, 2010; Schippers, 2007).

In order for hegemonic masculinity to remain the most powerful in the social order, it is necessary that the traits considered masculine that grant such ascendancy remain specific to men (Schippers, 2007). If women can possess these very same traits without consequence, then what justifies the domination of men and subordination of women? Traits and behaviours that support hegemonic masculinity and are therefore denied to women include promiscuity, frigidity,

aggressiveness, and certainly being sexually attracted to women (Schippers, 2007). In order to maintain the gender status quo, there are sanctions readily available for women who dare to demonstrate these traits or behaviours (Schippers, 2007).

Schippers (2007) proposes the term “pariah femininities” to describe types of femininity that include traditionally masculine traits or behaviours. She suggests this term in order to capture the quality of these alternate femininities, which encapsulate many of the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity. Despite possessing many of the traits that imbue social ascendancy to hegemonic masculinity, pariah femininities remain subordinate to hegemonic femininity. Hegemonic femininity retains the most social capital and the highest rank in the social order. Schippers (2007) further states that possessing these traditionally masculine characteristics is contaminating to the individual who possesses them; the possession of such characteristics turns that individual into a labelled person, such as a “lesbian”, a “slut”, or a “bitch” (p. 95). These labels then become master statuses for the women stuck with them (p. 95). It is important to note, however, that these traditionally male characteristics, when enacted by women, are no longer seen as masculine (Johnston & Kilty, 2015); instead, they are “both feminine and undesirable” (Schippers, 2007, p. 95).

Finley (2010) identifies another form of femininity that falls between hegemonic femininity and pariah femininity. By researching women’s roller derby, Finley identified “an example of how women transport pariah femininity discourse to local settings, dramatically altering them in the process” and ultimately reconfiguring them “into an “alternative” femininity that is not seen as contaminating but rather is honoured in that setting” (Finley, 2010, p. 365). This further highlights the importance of context in identifying various forms of both femininity and masculinity.

Hegemonic masculinity in corrections.

It is vital to contextualize this theory of gender relations; that is, most researchers in this area agree that the specific characteristics and behaviours of hegemonic masculinity, hegemonic (or emphasized) femininity, alternative femininity, and pariah femininity vary greatly between cultures, eras, and classes (R. W. Connell, 1987; R. W. Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Finley, 2010; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Schippers, 2007). Connell (1987) discusses *gender regimes*, identified as the way in which gender relations are institutionalized in any given organization or institution, taking into consideration time and place. There is not one single gender structure that always applies, which again highlights the importance of context. This study is looking specifically at the officer subculture as it exists within the Canadian corrections industry during the late 20th and early 21st century, and the specific characteristics and values that are components of hegemonic masculinity in this particular context. A number of researchers have looked at the work environment within corrections and found that masculine traits and behaviours are consistently valued over feminine ones, and that male officers are consistently valued over females (Burdett et al., 2018; Hemmens, Stohr, Schoeler, & Miller, 2002; N. C. Jurik, 1988; N. R. Jurik & Halemba, 1984; McMahon, 1999; Ricciardelli, 2017; Szockyj, 1987; Zimmer, 1987).

Specifically, traits and behaviours of value include machismo, pragmatism, suspiciousness, physical prowess, aggression, and strength (Ricciardelli, 2017). Women are told, directly or indirectly, to “sit there, stay cute and keep your mouth shut” (Burdett et al., 2018, p. 336). It is noted that there remains this perception, within the industry, that men must protect women; therefore, the belief that male officers must protect female officers persists (Burdett et al., 2018). This leads to male officers seeing female officers as a liability in dangerous

situations, which are always potentially a heartbeat away in a correctional setting (Ricciardelli, 2017). Traits associated to women through this process include fragility, weakness, incompetence, and therefore being in need of male protection (Burdett et al., 2018; Ricciardelli, 2017). In the gender regime of corrections, female officers are the “inferior other” (Schippers, 2007, p. 87; Tyler & Cohen, 2010).

As a result of this process of othering, women are “excluded and marginalized” in institutional environments; the research indicates that male officers are immediately accepted upon entrance to the industry whereas female officers are required to prove their worth repeatedly before gaining such acceptance (Burdett et al., 2018). Female officers are tested in a variety of ways, some related to the duties of the job and some related to how they interact with male officers. Can she handle an aggressive inmate? Let’s throw her into a situation – or even manufacture a situation – and find out. Is she one of those ‘feminists’ who gets offended and claims sexual harassment at every off-colour joke? Let’s put that to the test. These tests occur repeatedly, until the female officer has managed to prove herself worthy of acceptance. However, as noted by one of the participants in this study, a single off day as a female officer can revoke that acceptance; passing the tests is no guarantee that you will not be retested in the future. Furthermore, even passing these tests does not guarantee the same level of acceptance as male officers enjoy. There is always a sense of being ‘other’, of being outside the old boys’ club and therefore not automatically included. Even when a female officer is seen as just as physically capable as her male counterparts, there remained an ‘othering’, as demonstrated in Ricciardelli’s (2017) study:

They’re [female COs] not useful enough to benefit me, they’re taking space away from someone that could protect me. Don’t get me wrong! There are some girls here that can keep up with the best, but there’s parts of the job they can’t do . . . And they got no intimidation . . . The respect’s not there” (p. 13).

However, some officers accept their female colleagues wholeheartedly once they demonstrate the strength, physical prowess, pragmatism, etc. that are valued by the subculture:

She's [female officer] here tonight. She's bigger than I am . . . anybody who's been an inmate that's been around our shift . . . they know that they don't screw around with her. She'll put them in her place. And even come to the physical part if she has to (p. 13).

As a female officer, proving you are able and willing to put yourself at physical risk to do the job that needs to be done is a prerequisite of gaining acceptance.

Journal Entry: Wednesday

1500 hours... finally! It has been a long day. My lower back is killing me and I am exhausted from having worked a 16-hour shift yesterday. Only two more days in this rotation, then a few days off. I sigh as I trek toward the main entrance to head home. As much as I am looking forward to getting home, I am even more exhausted thinking about the demands my three children will have of me when they get home from school; due to a string of overtime, they haven't seen me much this week. As much as I miss them, my aching body just wants to go to bed.

I stand at the gate that is taking forever to open. Finally, a voice comes over the intercom, "return to Central, we have an incident, nobody goes home." As I turn to head back the way I came, my stomach clenches and my brain fires into overdrive. Did we just have a stabbing? Was an officer assaulted? What were we dealing with? The PA system blares the too-familiar announcement, "This is a lockdown. All inmates return to the living unit. This is a

lockdown.” Despite my anxiety, all I can think is ‘you couldn’t have waited five more minutes?’

At Central we learned this was not our average lockdown. We had a major incident brewing, with every inmate in the institution refusing to lock up. They were gathered in a common area of the institution, right outside the supervisors’ building. Where all of the on-duty supervisors were currently engaged in the shift change debriefing. They could not leave the building without having to push through more than 300 non-compliant inmates. They were effectively being held hostage. Those of us who were headed off shift were told this was an ‘all hands on deck’ situation and nobody was going home; we were given a few minutes to call home and advise our families before reporting back to Central for our assignments.

This is the first mandatory overtime situation I have experienced. These only happen during natural disasters, major incidents, and riots. My heart is pounding and I feel my adrenaline levels skyrocket. This manifests itself in shaking hands and a trembling voice when I try to speak. I feel antsy; I can’t stand still as I wait my turn for the phone. I call my husband.

“Hey, it’s me. I have to stay at work.”

“I thought you said you were not going to take anymore overtime this week. You need to get some sleep,” my husband responds, sounding slightly concerned but mostly irritated.

“I don’t have a choice. We have a situation. All officers have to stay.”

Silence. He knows what this means.

“I only have a minute. When the kids get home, tell them I love them. I will see them tomorrow. Don’t tell them about this. Don’t scare them,” my voice shakes.

“I love you, babe. Stay safe. Come home.” My husband no longer sounds irritated, just scared.

“I will.” I hang up, blinking rapidly to clear the tears in my eyes before turning around. There are male officers behind me, and crying is not allowed. I literally clench my jaw and grit my teeth before turning around to head back to Central.

On arrival I learn the situation has escalated. The inmates are pressed against the doors, ensuring the supervisors in the building can’t get out. The doors are locked but they are made of glass; despite assurances it is ‘shatter-proof’, there is still significant concern that they could break through the doors. They have also gathered wet paper towels to throw at the surveillance cameras, blinding the officers in Central to what is actually going on. This is now a crisis situation and the ranking officer in Central

takes the lead. The Emergency Response Team (ERT) is called out, but it will take them time to suit up and arrive on site. In the meantime, it is up to those of us being deployed by Central to various posts to isolate, contain, and control the situation.

There are two fellow new recruits - male officers I attended training with – standing with me. The three of us are given directions by Central, and because we are newly trained, we have up to date firearms certification. The officer in Central knows this; he also knows that many of the more senior officers are waiting to attend their annual recertification training in the coming months, and therefore are not currently firearms certified. That leaves us new recruits to take armed positions. When Central tells me I will head to my post with a shotgun in hand, to do what I need to in order to hold the perimeter of the involved area, all I can do is nod. I can't speak; my voice will shake and crack. I fight to control my emotions; my clenched fists and gritted teeth can be taken for anger, for aggression, which will be seen as acceptable – even admirable – in this situation. No one else needs to know I am terrified and wish I was anywhere else but here. I may actually have to shoot another human being today. I have broken out in a cold sweat; I feel goosebumps all over my arms. “You can do this,” I tell myself. “You have to. It may be the only way to ensure we all go home at the end of this day.”

My two fellow new recruits receive the same directive from the officer in Central; the perimeter line is to be armed. These two men, who I have heard make comments about women not being strong enough to do this job, refuse their assignments. They look at each other, then back to the officer in Central. They argue that they are too new, not experienced enough to be manning the armed perimeter. I fight not to let loose a sarcastic laugh at the irony of the phrase 'manning the perimeter' as I stand there waiting to head to my post with my fellow officers. Central gets angry; these two men continue to argue. Finally, grumbling, "I don't have time for this shit", Central sends each of these two officers to posts distant from the action. Posts that need to be covered, but short of an absolute disaster will not see any inmate interaction. I head to my post on the perimeter. I watch the crowd of inmates; I feel their anger and hatred as they feed off one another. In short order I am only angry, and ramped up, and ready to fight for my life. I feel righteous, being on the side of justice. I will stay strong and do what I need to do to protect my fellow officers. At this point, the fear has receded.

Shortly thereafter, with nothing much having happened other than the yelling of threats, throwing of debris, and starting some small fires, the ERT arrives on scene. I am relieved of my post by a far better trained, more experienced, and much better equipped

officer. I get reposted to a mobile patrol unit, far from the action. I make it into the unit and out onto the road, shaking like a leaf. I refuse to think about the situation, other than keeping a running track in my head of my duties. I take my notes. I watch the institution. Eventually, I stop shaking.

After a few hours, all the extra-duty officers are called back inside. We attend debriefing to learn that the ERT negotiator was able to get the inmates to lock up. We were now in a standard lockdown situation. I call my husband to say all is good and finish out the longest shift of my life.

After this incident, I found myself being treated differently by some of my male colleagues. Suddenly, I was being included in the jokes, rather than being the subject of them. I was occasionally asked for my opinion during a conversation. As I pondered these changes, one of the senior officers on my shift approaches me. He had decades of experience as a correctional officer. Previously, he barely acknowledged my existence. He was clear on many occasions that he did not think female officers belonged in men's institutions. I braced myself, ready to be chastised for something I couldn't even remember doing wrong. Instead, he gruffly tells me that I earned his respect on the day of the incident. He said he'd trust me to watch his back in any situation. I am shocked; I try to be nonchalant, to somehow minimize how important a moment this

is for me, but I am sure my stammering “th-tha-thanks” combined with the look of utter astonishment on my face ruins my efforts at casualness. I made it; I was in. Too bad I had to literally place my life and safety on the line to gain that level of acceptance.

Those two male recruits who refused to take the dangerous positions? They were taunted; other officers called them ‘the pussy twins’ for a while. A number of officers, myself included, were uncomfortable being paired with either of them. They lost some respect in the eyes of their fellow officers. But they were still welcome; they still belonged. They were still on the inside of the inappropriate jokes, the sexist comments, the sexual harassment. Nobody deemed all men weak or incompetent based on their failure to take action. The difference for me? Now when the sexist jokes were made, when women were described as weak or useless or emotional, I got a ‘present company excluded’ kind of comment. A ‘you’re not like other women’ comment. Sigh.

Identity Practices and the Performativity of Gender

Identity practices are behaviours, verbalizations, and presentations that communicate an individual’s identity; with regard to gender identities in particular, continuing performative practices produce and communicate this identity to others (Butler, 1990; Sasson-Levy, 2003). How do women, particularly those engaged in hegemonic femininity, project their womanhood to the world? They dress a certain way, use specific types of body language and expression, speak a certain way, and use appropriate adornment to present the world with the currently

accepted image of 'woman'. Bartky (1990) outlines three categories of disciplinary practices used by women to create feminine bodies in capitalist patriarchal societies. First, there are practices that create bodies "of a certain size and general configuration"; second, practices that prompt "a specific repertoire of gestures, postures, and movements"; and finally, practices that require the feminine body to be displayed as "an ornamented surface" (p. 468). The type of feminine bodies Bartky is referring to are those belonging to women engaging in hegemonic femininity (Bartky, 1990).

Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity outlines that all gender practices are performative, and therefore potentially transitory, in nature. This description applies to both Bartky's (1990) disciplinary practices and Sasson-Levy's (2003) identity practices. According to Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, gender is not at all stable; in fact, gender is "an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts", a constructed identity that is purposely maintained (Butler, 1988, p. 481). This identity construction is a social temporality and is communicated to the world through the display of the body and the discursive practices used by that body (Butler, 1988, 1990). Men and women both engage in a variety of discursive practices to communicate their gender to the world around them (R. W. Connell, 1995; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Sasson-Levy, 2003).

Orna Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices.

Sasson-Levy (2003) conducted a study into the lived experiences of female Israeli soldiers. The larger study on which her article *Feminism and military gender practices: Israeli women soldiers in masculine roles* was based involved in-depth interviews with 52 male soldiers and 47 female soldiers within one year of being discharged from the military. Of these women, 12 served in roles traditionally considered to be masculine. In assessing identity practices,

Sasson-Levy framed identity as “relational and situational” as conceptualized by feminist and postmodern thought (Sasson-Levy, 2003, p. 441). Her analysis is significantly informed by both R.W. Connell’s theories around hegemonic masculinity and femininity and Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity (Sasson-Levy, 2003).

Sasson-Levy (2003) notes that women in masculine roles in the Israeli military hold some of the most prestigious positions available (teaching weapons, tank operation, missile shooting) yet they are still marginalized as women *within* the system rather than being a fundamental component *of* the system (Sasson-Levy, 2003; Tyler & Cohen, 2010). Through the data collected in her interviews, Sasson-Levy noted that these women created alternative gender identities for themselves; identities Schippers (2007) and Finley (2010) have called alternative femininities or pariah femininities. These identities allowed them to gain acceptance within the military culture, if not equal to their male colleagues, then at least greater than their traditionally feminine counterparts. Sasson-Levy identified the following three interrelated identity practices as techniques utilized by the women she interviewed:

- (1) Mimicry of combat soldiers’ bodily and discursive practices.
- (2) Distancing from “traditional femininity”.
- (3) Trivialization of sexual harassment.

(Sasson-Levy, 2003, p. 447)

The first of these identity practices involves modifications to the way in which these female soldiers dressed, carried themselves, and spoke. One of the women described herself during her military tour as having looked like a man, saying:

Well, first of all, you wear this uniform, which is really big on you, so it’s very gawky; you don’t wear a uniform that is tight on your body. And you walk with a rifle and then your voice drops. I didn’t talk to people like this [in her regular voice]; I would speak like this [in a lower voice] (p. 448).

Sasson-Levy notes that this clearly fits Butler's (1990) definition of a "stylized repetition of acts" that is gender performativity. This female soldier is using her bodily and discursive practices to enact gender differently than she had previously in her life. However, she is not becoming a man; rather, she is engaging in the production and communication of a gender identity that is neither 'man' nor 'woman'. The fact that not all female soldiers engage in this masculinization of their bodily and discursive practices hints at the spectrum of genders and the variability of identity. These women are producing their gender through continuous enactment and re-enactment of bodily and discursive practices they believe required by their gender, which is the not-man but not-woman of the female soldier in a traditionally male occupation (Butler, 1990). In addition, Sasson-Levy (2003) notes that in some cases, women soldiers were *directed* to conceal their femininity. Such direction is a reflection of the military's stance that women – if they look and act like women – cannot lead. Even on military bases where this direction was not given, women soldiers understood the underlying implication – in order to have authority, they could not enact femininity in traditional ways.

The second identity practice seems to complement the first; if one is mimicking male bodily and discursive practices, then one must distance oneself from their female counterparts, right? At least, if gender continues to be viewed as an opposing dichotomy of either/or, then this would be the case. A female soldier interviewed by Sasson-Levy (2003) expressed the following:

It was like a kindergarten. Seven hundred thousand girls . . . My saying for the whole time of basic training was that a girl can't see worse nightmares. Everyone had creams, lipsticks, all sorts of . . . disgusting . . . seven hundred thousand makeups. Pathetic. I felt like nothing, like one of seven hundred thousand other tits (p. 452).

This soldier clearly sees herself as separate from these women in her basic training cohort; these women are the “inferior other”, and it is this othering that allows this particular female soldier to identify with male soldiers and enact masculine gender attributes (Schippers, 2007, p. 87).

The third identity practice of trivializing sexual harassment, while disturbing, also complements the first two while corresponding to some of the precepts of hegemonic masculinity. Many studies have shown that engaging in sexist or sexual harassment and/or sexual violence, as well as minimizing such incidents, are components of hegemonic masculinity and indeed assist in maintaining the dominance of men and subordination of women (Pogrebin & Poole, 1997; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Robinson, 2005; Weitz, 2015). For these female soldiers, who are desperately trying to enact a new gendered identity so as to gain worth and acceptance within the androcentric military culture, the last thing they want is to be seen as a victim (Sasson-Levy, 2003). In one case, a female soldier related events that included her attending a meeting with a number of male colleagues, who proceeded to interact with her by flirting. She then received letters from three of the sector’s regimental commanders, each pleading with her to “make up [her] mind” regarding which of them she wanted to engage in an intimate relationship with (Sasson-Levy, 2003, p. 454). Sasson-Levy (2003) notes that such behaviour on the part of commanding officers is sexual harassment, but the female soldier does not see it that way, stating “maybe other people would call them sexual harassment. But I don’t; I really, really don’t” (p. 454). Another woman had her commanding officer show her pictures of naked women, which she chose to ignore. She felt that reacting in any other way would identify her as feminine and therefore weak and in need of rescuing, as well as make her a target for further “teasing” (Sasson-Levy, 2003, p. 455). Trivializing, minimizing, and pretending it did not happen; all of

these techniques for dealing with sexual harassment were revealed in the stories told by these female soldiers.

Reading this article caused an almost visceral reaction in me. I have utilized each of these identity practices while working in corrections. Reading each outlined so blatantly; my stomach clenched, I felt nauseated. I reacted to these women's stories initially with incredulity – come on, you are really going to pretend that isn't sexual harassment? You really need to belittle someone else's gender expression to justify your own? – followed by a sickening sense of hypocrisy. I have done this; and this, and this. I have mimicked men's bodily and discursive practices while in corrections, both as a uniformed officer and as a non-uniformed officer. I participated in belittling and dismissing women who did engage in these acts of hegemonic femininity. I participated in group discussions where the promiscuity and sexual habits of women officers who enacted hegemonic femininity were discussed disparagingly. I have ignored sexist comments, laughed at sexual jokes, and brushed off blatantly graphic sexual stories that were clearly engineered to gauge my response. All because I was actively working to gain acceptance into a subculture that is unashamedly androcentric.

Sasson-Levy (2003) notes that the identity practices utilized by female soldiers were situational and temporary. When she met up with these women within a year of their military service, these identity practices no longer held true. Many had embraced components of traditional femininity; they no longer looked, walked, and talked like male soldiers. I have observed the same thing in myself, albeit only partially. Some components of the officer subculture are enforced more rigidly within institutional settings than in community settings. However, other components remain strong. There remains proscriptions against dressing 'too' feminine, wearing 'too much' make-up, and so on even in community corrections. For me, it

took a number of years in the community – and a good hard look at myself and the changes that working in corrections has wrought in my identity – before I realized that these proscriptions exist under the guise of safety but were actually techniques to maintain the subordination of women in the industry. The idea that a woman working in community corrections should not wear a skirt to work for ‘safety reasons’; that is, so that she won’t tempt a sex offender to rape her, is ludicrous. If any offender being supervised in the community is so incapable of managing his impulses that the simple sight of a woman in a skirt is going to induce a violent sexual assault, then that offender needs to be incarcerated. Offenders in the community encounter women in skirts, women wearing make-up, women wearing jewellery, every single day. Do we tell all women of the world to cease these feminine practices in order to make sure they are not raped on the street? Of course not. It is no more necessary a proscription within community corrections. Yes, I have worked with rapists. Yes, they present a risk to re-offend. No, my wearing some mascara or a skirt in the summer is not going to *cause* them to re-offend. However, it took five years of working in the community to wear a skirt to work. Guess what? I was not raped. I was just as safe (or unsafe, as the case may be) in a skirt as in pants. In corrections, our safety is always precarious, and always related to our de-escalation skills. My de-escalation skills do not deteriorate the instant I put on a skirt. I am embarrassed that it took me so long to reach this conclusion, to recognize this was simply a tactic of control and dominance.

Sasson-Levy (2003) argues that the identity practices used by the female soldiers she interviewed have two contradictory interpretations. First, these identity practices can be subversive, in their refusal to accept “military definitions of masculinity and femininity as essentially dichotomous entities” (p. 447). By refusing the traditional feminine role and identity,

these women are belying the theory that gender is a stable, unchanging construct. Rather, they are highlighting the temporal, constructivist, and performative nature of gender. They are refusing to have their gender identity, character, or capabilities tied to their biologically female body. However, their acceptance of traditional masculine traits as necessary for success in the military only “reproduce[s] masculinity’s normativeness” (p. 448). By mimicking male soldiers while also disparaging female soldiers engaged in hegemonic femininity, these female soldiers only further reinforce hegemonic masculinity. Their own attitudes and behaviours state very clearly that masculinity is superior; so obviously superior as to be worthy of emulation. This only further justifies male domination and female subordination as both natural and necessary.

After years of engaging in the identity practices Sasson-Levy (2003) outlines, I began to wonder about their effectiveness. I often refer to my early training in corrections as my ‘indoctrination into the officer subculture’, and much of that indoctrination was designed to make me receptive to the values, attitudes and beliefs that persist within the subculture. While the officer subculture has many positive benefits, such as the camaraderie and the safety that comes with numbers, it also has a variety of detrimental effects. The suspiciousness and paranoia that begins pragmatically continues to grow until it becomes impossible to view the world without the lens of subculture beliefs. All of a sudden, the paranoia extends to all aspects of the officer’s life, until everyone is viewed as a potential criminal. Dr. Kevin Gilmartin (2002) sums this subculture effect up in a story he tells in his seminars, wherein he asks the audience (all law enforcement personnel) to speak the first word that comes to mind when he says ‘boy scout leader’. The audience responds with ‘pedophile’. While the audience chuckles, enjoying a moment of shared understanding of the twisted nature of the world, Dr. Gilmartin reminds us that this is not normal. This is the cumulative effect of suspiciousness, paranoia, and near-total

immersion in the officer subculture. In short order, this leads to a constant state of arousal and negativity known as hypervigilance (Gilmartin, 2002). Hypervigilance has serious, negative health impacts over the long run; impacting both mental and physical health by increasing the rates of depression, anxiety, suicide, cardiovascular disease, etc. (Gilmartin, 2002). These issues are compounded by the trauma we are exposed to daily; first-hand trauma, secondary traumatic stress, and vicarious trauma, all of which have their own negative effects on the human mind and body (Gilmartin, 2002).

Sadly, gender-based issues, such as sexist/sexual harassment and sexual violence, are additional traumatic effects of the officer subculture. Sexual harassment and violence are two of the numerous and varied methods used to enact and perform hegemonic masculinity (Robinson, 2005). This is true within the officer subculture as well, where sexist/sexual harassment and even sexual violence are not only permitted but in some cases even encouraged (Johnson, 2017a, 2017b; Johnston & Kilty, 2015; Robinson, 2005; Wakefield, 2017; Warnica, 2016, 2017). Existing literature indicates that gender based discrimination in the workplace occurs around policies and stereotypes (Burdett et al., 2018). Resistance to women entering a workplace is generally formalized in policies and practices that impact issues such as getting hired and the conditions of employment, whereas gender stereotypes are the basis of informal resistance inherent in the daily practices and androcentric subculture (van Wijk & Finchilescu, 2008). Much has been done in an effort to address formal resistance since women entered the corrections industry, including changes to legislation, policy, and updated training (Canada, 1990; McMahon, 1999). Legislation like the Canadian Human Rights Act and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms prohibit discrimination based on sex or sexual orientation. Policies have changed around women working in facilities that incarcerate male inmates and the

job duties of women officers, to remove much of the discrepancy in job descriptions; although there do remain tasks that are restricted from occurring across genders, such as strip searches (*Commissioner's Directive 566-7; Searching of Offenders*, 2015). Finally, staff training modules around anti-harassment practices, respectful workplaces, and sensitivity to diversity have become mandatory within the last decade. However, these formal changes have done nothing to address the informal gender stereotypes and the prevalent hegemonic masculinity that exists within the lived experience of the subculture.

Methodology

Context

This project was born of my own lived experience and my desire to explore how to make change in the subculture to which I belong. The subculture that both supported me and tore me down, that impacted not just the way I looked at the world but the way I interacted with it and therefore, the way the world looked at me. Initially, I envisioned this project from a positivist perspective; I saw myself doing 10 – 15 semi-structured interviews with women employed in the corrections industry. I intended to use thematic analysis to identify themes around the identity practices used by my participants, and then analyze how these identity practices contributed to the ongoing patriarchal and hegemonic positioning of masculinity above femininity within the subculture. I wanted to explore the idea that it is buying into this underlying belief – that femininity has no value in corrections – that makes corrections a toxic work environment for all officers, regardless of gender.

I thought this process should have been just fine, should have worked well... but I found that I was losing myself in it. I felt my own expertise in this matter being dismissed. The language was dry. The information was dull. Where did the *feeling* go? This subject engenders such passion in me; why wasn't that coming through? *Should* it come through? I struggled with the positivist underpinnings of my education, which focused on the idea of 'objectivity' at the expense of passion. It seemed, if I was passionate about a topic, I couldn't possibly be objective. I didn't even *want* to be objective; this project was about lived experiences and why on earth would that not include my own lived experience? In this meandering fashion, arguing with myself every step of the way, I slowly made my way toward autoethnography.

Initially, I had three research questions. First, *does the officer subculture incorporate and perpetuate hegemonic masculinity?* I included this question originally because I was taught that I could not simply *say* that the officer subculture incorporates and perpetuates hegemonic masculinity. Despite 14 years of experience submersed in the subculture, I believed I needed empirical evidence beyond my own experience to make this assertion. However, with autoethnography, *I am the expert; my lived experience is the empirical evidence that backs this up.* Furthermore, the research outlined in my literature review supports the conclusions reached by my lived experience. Between the existing scholarship and my own experience, this first ‘research question’ is unnecessary.

My second and third research questions were *how does the officer subculture shape the identity practices of female corrections officers, both on and off duty?* and *Is Orna Sasson-Levy’s (2003) theory of identity practices applicable to the lived experiences of female corrections officers?* But again, these questions were formulated to stand alone, in a space absent of my own lived experiences. Worded as they are, they imply I do not know the answers; that my level of knowledge at the beginning of this project did not allow me to answer any part of these questions. But that is not true. It is more of my attempt to make this project fit a positivist perspective that simply isn’t right for what I am trying to do. I *know* that Sasson-Levy’s (2003) theory of identity practices is in fact applicable to the lived experiences of at least some female corrections officers, because it applied to me. When I read Sasson-Levy’s work, it resonated with me; I thought *‘ah, there it is. This is me. This is what I did, what women I know did. This is how we made it work, being a woman yet also being accepted into this subculture.’* So really, the question I am left with, the one this project is actually going to explore, is ‘how

does the officer subculture, in all its gendered hegemonic glory, influence the identity practices of female officers in both their working and non-working lives?’

I have come to realize that I need to tell my story. I need to tell the stories of the two women I interviewed. I need to tell these stories with all the passion they inspire in me, with all the emotion they create and evoke, because that emotion *is* the reality. Trying to remove the emotion is like trying to describe someone without using adjectives; an exercise in futility. Being in corrections has changed me as a woman, as a partner, as a parent... as a human. Those changes are important. Those changes help to outline why the subculture itself needs to change, and how we can make those changes happen. As an industry, corrections is about changing behaviour, changing attitudes, changing values; how can we do this for others if we cannot do it for ourselves?

So what is ‘lived experience’ anyway? This phrase has multiple meanings, but for the purpose of this project, lived experience refers to both actual experiences and the ways in which those experiences influence the lives of those enduring them. What meanings have been made of these experiences? How do those meanings colour thoughts, feelings, and behaviours? Lived experiences are the sum total of who I am and the experiences I have lived, and the ways in which each of these reflect on and shape the other (Given, 2008).

As a method of knowledge translation, story-telling is effective, accessible, and memorable (Bourbonnais & Michaud, 2018). Plot, characters, interaction, action... all are integral parts of a story, but the emotion evoked by the tale makes it memorable and relatable. Consider the lessons learned from the fairy tales we tell our children: don’t judge a book by its cover, treat others as you would like to be treated... these are important lessons inherent in *Beauty and the Beast*, but it is the love, the fear, the anxiety provoked by the story that drives the

lessons home. Without those emotions, the story would lose its impact. Between telling stories and analyzing meaning, I am striving to share knowledge with my brothers and sisters in blue, who – collectively – have the power to make a difference in the subculture.

Good Qualitative Research

Assessing the quality of qualitative research can be difficult. There are many different theories in regard to what makes good qualitative research, ranging from ideas of ‘saturation’ and similar concepts that remain based in the positivist tradition, to concepts such as empathic validity, transferability, and tacit knowledge (Dadds, 2008; Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006; Mason, 2010; O’Reilly & Parker, 2012; Saunders et al., 2017; Tracy, 2010; van Rijnsoever, 2017). Tracy (2010) outlines eight “big-tent” criteria for good qualitative research that can apply across theories and paradigms. Tracy cautions against these criteria becoming a checklist and notes that not all research will meet all of these criteria; but, at the same time, none of these criteria are sufficient measures of quality on their own. Furthermore, the means by which the criteria is attained will differ based on paradigm, approach, and methods used. The eight criteria identified by Tracy are: worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethical, and meaningful coherence. I have used these eight criteria to guide my research.

Tracy (2010) identifies ‘worthy topic’ as being “relevant, timely, significant, interesting, or evocative” (p. 840). Worthy topics can grow out of theory, current events, or personal experience and should engage readers and possibly challenge assumptions. ‘Rich rigor’ is demonstrated by a “rich complexity of abundance”, including a variety of theoretical frameworks, data sources, contexts, and samples (p. 841). ‘Sincerity’ is about authenticity and genuineness, achieved through self-reflexivity and transparency regarding goals, biases,

assumptions, and shortcomings. ‘Credibility’ refers to the “trustworthiness, verisimilitude, and plausibility of the research findings” which can be attained through techniques including thick description, triangulation, and crystallization (p. 842). The crystal is a “central imaginary” to demonstrate the multi-dimensionality of social phenomenon and the fact that our understanding of an issue is directly related to our position of observation. “Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous. Crystals are prisms that reflect externalities *and* refract within themselves, creating different colours, patterns, and arrays, casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). ‘Resonance’ refers to the ability of research to resound with readers, impacting emotions and possibly leading to a desire to take action. Creating knowledge that is transferable to varied contexts contributes to resonance. ‘Significant contribution’ asks whether the research is meaningful in furthering knowledge, proposing new theories, or inspiring change or action, ‘Ethical’ research is principled and just in both means and end goals. ‘Meaningfully coherent’ studies are those that “...eloquently interconnect their research design, data collection, and analysis with their theoretical framework and situational goals” (p. 848). Such research accomplishes its stated purposes, uses paradigms, theories, and methods that are suited to achieving the stated goals, and reviews literature that is specifically relevant to the research at hand.

A brief note on sample size.

It is worth noting that sample size was not mentioned in Tracy’s (2010) article on good qualitative research. This is because the question of sample size is inherently tied to method, approach, and theory and can therefore vary widely in qualitative research. There is no magic number when it comes to sample size, and using Tracy’s ‘big-tent’ criteria is far more useful in assessing good qualitative research than is some arbitrary rule regarding sample size.

Furthermore, according to Baker and Edwards (2012), an argument can be made for a sample of almost any size, depending on the specifics of the population you are studying and the type of conclusions reached. There are situations in which a sample size of one – the single, in-depth case study – is entirely appropriate (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Flyvbjerg, 2006). Large samples may be useful in cases where access is open and subjects are plentiful, but there are likely to be concerns regarding the sheer volume of data if one conducts too many in-depth interviews. Ultimately, sample size will influence the conclusions of any study, in that the data you have collected must support your conclusions and your conclusions must not go further than the evidence you have collected can support.

A sample size of three (researcher included) is entirely appropriate in this case. This study is about in-depth analysis of lived experiences, both my own and those of my two participants. My chosen methods both call for small sample sizes; autoethnography generally encompasses a sample size of one (the researcher), or is used in conjunction with other methods. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) is generally used with very small sample sizes, as the interpretations and “double hermeneutic” involved in the process are lengthy and time consuming (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012; Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009). Furthermore, in IPA samples need to be homogeneous when the focus is on “convergence and divergence” within a purposive sample (Pietkiewicz & Smith 2012; Smith et al., 2009, p. 3). Both autoethnography and IPA require significant reflexivity, which demands deep introspection and detailed consideration that is more manageable with a smaller sample size. (C. Ellis, 2004; Smith et al., 2009).

Methodological Frameworks

Autoethnography is a particular approach to research that specifically relies on the subjective experience of the researcher as material to be analyzed in order to understand and illuminate cultural experience (Adams, Holman Jones, & Ellis, 2015; C. Ellis, Adams, & Bochner, 2011). By analysis of the researcher's personal experience the question of subjectivity is no longer a question; it is made fact. Autoethnography highlights subjectivity by reflexively acknowledging the expertise of personal experience and insisting the researcher investigate the interrelations between self and society, between individual and culture (Adams et al., 2015). Thus, engaging in autoethnographic analysis entails analyzing the way in which the self engages with the culture and the ways in which that engagement is interpreted, internalized, and externalized (Adams et al., 2015; C. Ellis et al., 2011; Holman Jones, Adams, & Ellis, 2013).

Autoethnography is nonfiction storytelling, with an emphasis on analyzing the relation between the individual lived experience of the storyteller and the greater social/cultural/political world. It is creative and reflexive, intended to draw the reader in and bring the emotion of the experience into the research for further analysis of its impact (Adams et al., 2015). It is the "use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience" (Holman Jones, Adams & Ellis, 2013, p. 22). When used in combination with interviewing others, it may involve connecting with participants through common experiences, history, or culture (C. Ellis, 2004). It also means being open to connecting with participants; in the rapport that develops between interviewer and participant, particularly in cases where access has been gained because of that shared relationship, the interviewer must be prepared to answer questions as well as ask them (C. Ellis, 2004). In these interactive interviews, emphasis is on both the information shared by the participant as well as the specific interactions that occur in the interview setting (C. Ellis et al., 2011).

Autoethnography seemed an obvious choice to me when choosing methods for this study. I worked in the corrections industry for many years; I am very much an ‘insider’ to the industry. Given my ability to access participants in a usually closed population, I am acting as my own gatekeeper. It would be impossible, if not hypocritical, to utilize my insider status in this way and yet try to remain objective and removed from my participants. This topic is very personal to me, and I am going to share the emotion and *feeling* involved in being a woman in the subculture while interpreting the influence of those feelings on both female officers and the industry they work in. Furthermore, the socially constructed concept of femininity as being emotional is inherent to the topic at hand; indeed, I contend that this concept of femininity as emotional (and emotional as weak or incompetent) is one of the contributing factors to the current gender-related issues in the subculture. In a patriarchal society all things feminine are deemed less worthy; worthless. By insisting on removing emotion from research, positivism only furthers the demonization of all things feminine, whereas I have chosen to use an evocative narrative autoethnography to bring affect and emotion out of the private “feminine” sphere and into social research, no longer seen as a “barrier to producing objective and rational research” (Adams et al., 2015). Thus, it seems most appropriate to use an autoethnographic approach, which embraces emotion as a valid way of knowing, to analyze the experiences of female officers in the officer subculture.

According to Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009), IPA is a qualitative research approach that involves the study of experience from the perspective of those who experienced it. It is interpretive because the researcher is interested in how the person living the experience makes sense of the experience. However, as the researcher is also making sense of (or interpreting) the meaning given to the experience by the subject, the researcher can be said to be “engaged in a

double hermeneutic” (p. 3). The researcher is more analytical about their interpretation than the subject is, and may be consciously employing a particular theoretical framework during the process of interpretation. In addition, the researcher must be considering how their involvement with the participant (as well as the researcher’s own involvement with the subject matter) has shaped the information received (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2012). In this, IPA is a highly reflexive approach. Finally, IPA is also idiographic, as it is focused on the detailed experience of this particular person and their perception of their experience. First, the researcher must describe and analyze each individual experience in full, then common themes between experiences can be identified and analyzed.

With this project, I am problematizing the hegemonic masculinity that exists within the officer subculture. Through detailed and evocative narratives, I am bringing this issue to life for readers, inspiring emotion and passion about the injustices of gender inequality and harassment that female corrections officers face every day. Through IPA and autoethnography, I am identifying prevalent identity practices among female corrections officers and analyzing the ways in which those practices further reinforce hegemonic masculinity while at the same time allowing for the acceptance of some women into the old boys’ club that is the officer subculture. Furthermore, I am exploring the ways in which those identity practices shape the lived experiences of female corrections officers, changing who they are and how they see themselves. The end result of this project will be knowledge that is rigorous, credible, sincere, and coherent, while also being transferable to and useful in some of the varied contexts within which women live and work.

Methods

This study involves two participants in addition to myself. Both participants are active or past female correctional officers. Both have held a position within the industry that has ‘officer’ in the title, such as Correctional Officer, Programs Officer, Parole Officer, or Probation Officer. Some of these positions are uniformed positions and some are not; some are found within institutional settings and some in community settings. Regardless, in my experience, any position that has the word ‘officer’ in the title is part of the officer subculture to some extent.

My positioning within the industry allowed me access to my participants. The corrections industry is a closed system; outsiders are not easily welcomed and any information shared outside of the system is heavily vetted. In 14 years in the industry, I cannot count the number of times front line staff received mass direction about not communicating with the media at all and remembering the significant limitations on what we are allowed to say to members of the public. Take, for example, the Corrections Canada code of discipline (available on their public website) which states that

(6) “an employee has committed an infraction if he/she:

(e) makes public statements which harshly criticize the Service, the Government of Canada, or the Federal Crown, concerning policies, practices and/or programs of the government, or violates the Oath of Office and Secrecy” (*Commissioner's Directive 060: Code of Discipline*, 2011)

(8) “an employee has committed an infraction if he/she:

(c) acts, while on or off duty, in a manner likely to discredit the Service” (*Commissioner's Directive 060: Code of Discipline*, 2011)

While this does not explicitly state that officers cannot discuss the challenges of working in corrections, in my experience that is the meaning most officers have internalized. While none of

us would violate the security or privacy of protected information, I have spoken to many officers who would like to be able to tell the public what it is *actually like* to work in the field. They do not, because of erroneous subculture beliefs that it would be illegal or unethical for them to do so. These beliefs are slowly being challenged by officers like those at Edmonton Institution, who came forward about sexist/sexual harassment, sexual assault, and assault (Wakefield, 2018; Wakefield & Junker, 2019). However, situations like the one from BC where a female officer was asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement regarding the sexist and sexual harassment she faced during training, in exchange for being given a coveted position, only further reinforces officers' fears and uncertainty about what they can say and who they can say it to (Johnson, 2017b). Therefore, officers are very cautious about speaking with 'outsiders', and being a member of this community is the only way to access accounts of life in the subculture. I intentionally selected both of my participants based on accessibility and my knowledge of their experiences. I am telling a story, and a story does not involve characters selected at random.

My interviews were semi-structured in nature, with some specific questions that I wanted to ask and some topics I needed to cover. My questions focused on the ways in which the participants' gender interacted with their employment and their acceptance into the officer subculture. With these questions, I probed for the participants' understanding of the impact of their experiences; how they made sense of their lived experiences as women and correctional officers. Were their bodily and discursive practices impacted by their admission to the industry? Did their opinions of femininity change? Were they subjected to sexist or sexual harassment? And most importantly, what meaning did they make of these experiences? Appendix A includes the interview guide I utilized during this project.

My interview guide included fully-worded questions, which I used in their entirety many times (see Appendix A). However, I also allowed the flow of the conversation to guide my questions, sometimes pursuing a line of thought with additional questions or different wording than written in my schedule. The flexibility of this arrangement was facilitated by my inclusion in the subculture and my fluency with the language of the subculture. It also allowed the conversation to follow a natural progression at times, increasing the comfort of my participants and encouraging their reminiscences.

Some of these questions were specific to Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices; others were inspired by current events in the corrections industry. Since approximately 2016, current events in Canada have included a number of disturbing headlines outlining events of sexual harassment/violence in the industry and the attempts by correctional organizations to cover them up (Johnson, 2017a, 2017b; Warnica, 2016, 2017). I recalled women I had worked with who had fled the industry in shame, or fear, due to constant harassment. A particular young woman I worked with who was so harassed due to having large breasts – and being forced into uniform shirts not designed to appropriately fit such a body – that she spent part of every shift in tears. She quit, only four months into her career. She was a kind and empathetic young woman with a genuine desire to help people change and make the world a better place, and she was forced out of her job in shame because she was unable to hide her body in the same way other women could in boxy uniform shirts.

A research assistant transcribed these interviews within four weeks of each interview. I listened to each interview while reading the transcript, in order to verify accuracy and make any changes needed, and I read over each transcript several times. Prior to directly quoting the participants, I again compared that section of the transcript to the audio recording to ensure

accuracy to the best of my ability. I utilized Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to assist in both coding and data analysis. As data analysis occurred alongside coding, both will be addressed in the data analysis section of this thesis.

Emergent Themes

I will begin by exploring the meanings presented and discovered in each participant's story, while interspersing pieces of my own story where relevant. I was able to identify some common themes, which fit seamlessly into the framework of Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices. While not generalizable to all female corrections officers, the fact that these themes recur in both my experience and that of my two participants indicates they are not isolated incidents. They provide direction for future research and perhaps even guidance for change.

First, I must introduce you to Mel and Alli, and make sure to do justice to their stories of their lived experiences. Please note that I refer to both participants by pseudonym only, throughout the entirety of this project. In the interests of confidentiality, I will be excluding or modifying all potentially identifying characteristics and details. Furthermore, I will take great liberty in the terminology I use, sometimes borrowing from pop culture or Hollywood references. For example, in parts of the Canadian corrections system, the hallway along which cells are arranged in a prison are called 'ranges' while in other areas of the industry they are referred to as 'tiers'. According to Hollywood, however, these hallways are called 'tiers', so that is the terminology I have chosen to use in this paper. This serves two purposes: first, to protect security information that is vital to the industry; and second, to allow for shared understanding by use of lingo that is commonly understood. While this terminology will not necessarily be accurate to the Canadian corrections context, it will provide a common language that will enable readers to picture the scene with enough accuracy to grasp the context.

Mel

I met with Mel one afternoon at a residential location. She reviewed and signed the consent form, and agreed to have her interview recorded and later transcribed. Once she selected her pseudonym, we commenced the interview. Mel discussed her experiences in the Canadian corrections industry, where she worked as an officer for more than a decade. She held both uniformed and non-uniformed positions as an officer, and worked in both institutional and community environments. As I coded and re-coded the transcript of Mel's interview, I began to consider the different ways I could interpret her statements and stories. I identified a variety of concepts in her stories and statements, and then noted relationships between concepts and overarching themes applying to those concepts. I utilized Nvivo qualitative data analysis software to assist me in this traditional method of coding qualitative research (Elliott, 2018). In addition to this traditional method of coding, I opted to consider the language Mel used during the interview. This was not done in detail as I am not engaging in discourse analysis, but even cursory reflection on the language a person chooses to use often tells us something about that person. The specific words chosen, and those used frequently, can provide a sense of the person behind the interview and the varied emphases they invoke. I utilized word frequency clouds, constructed with Nvivo software, to explore the language used by my participants. A word frequency cloud is a visual representation of the words used most frequently in a selected text, with the words used most often being printed in the largest font (Wang et al., 2018). In Mel's case, the top twenty words of significance (excluding prepositions, verbal pauses, etc.) that she used during her interview are visually represented in figure 1.

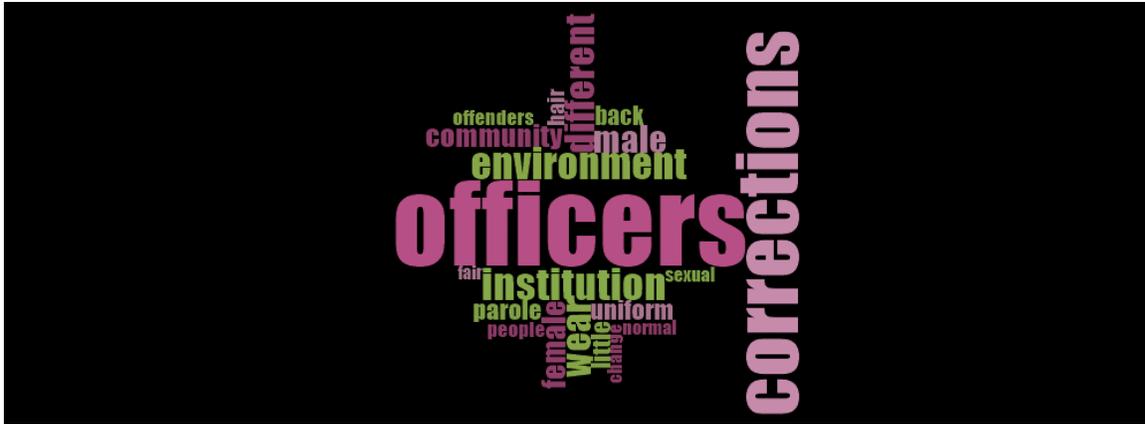


Figure 1: Mel's Word Frequency Cloud

While some of these words seem obvious ('officers', 'corrections', and 'institution' for example), you will see when we get to meeting Alli that both participants did not use the same language. The language they did share was not used at the same frequency (indicated by the size of the font in the above diagram). I believe this visual representation provides a feeling of Mel within the context of this study; a hint of who she is, how she thinks, and what is important to her when it comes to her lived experience as a female corrections officer. In the absence of being able to share the actual recording of the interview, I think Mel's tone is brought to life in this visual representation of her language. Throughout her interview, Mel demonstrated a reluctance to generalize along gender lines. She would speak about officers as an entirety or about individual officers, but not about 'men' and 'women' as discrete and inclusive categories. The central billing given to the word 'officers' in the above diagram is a visual representation of the significance this status has to her identity, and perhaps indicates that she sees 'officer' as an identity unto itself, irrespective of gender. Furthermore, her word frequency cloud highlights more words involving the nature of the job of a corrections officer rather than her gender identity, such as 'officers', 'corrections', 'institution', 'environment', 'uniform', 'offenders',

‘back’, ‘fair’, and ‘parole’. This diagram further gives the impression that she focused more on the institution than the community, which is an accurate reflection of the interview data.

Another interesting point to consider is her chosen pseudonym. Both participants were provided the opportunity to choose their own pseudonym; there were no boundaries placed on this selection. Mel chose a pseudonym that can be viewed as masculine, or at least androgynous. This factor may have had no bearing on her choice; however, in light of the subject matter it is interesting to consider whether the androcentric nature of the subculture being discussed had any influence on this selection. This study is not designed to analyze matters of language or pseudonym selection in any depth; however, this may be an area of interest for future research.

Alli

I met with Alli late in the afternoon at a residential location. She reviewed and signed the consent form, and agreed to have her interview recorded and later transcribed. Once she selected her pseudonym, we commenced the interview. Alli is in the early stages of her career, and as such her experience in the corrections industry is of much shorter duration than Mel’s. Despite this, she has worked as an officer in both a community and an institutional environment. She has not held a uniformed position. I followed the same process for coding Alli’s transcript as I did for coding Mel’s, including giving consideration to the language she chose to use. Figure 2 shows the top twenty words of significance Alli used:



Figure 2: Alli's Word Frequency Cloud

While Alli also used the words 'officers' and 'corrections', she used others far more often. The words 'wear', 'little', and 'girl', for example, are prominent in Alli's discourse. I believe this relates to the varied levels of indoctrination into the officer subculture experienced by these two women, which coincides with their years of experience in the industry. Alli remains new to the industry; she has not yet garnered acceptance into the officer subculture. She is still struggling with her own identity, and has yet to decide if (and to what degree) she will make the changes she sees as necessary to be accepted. While she enjoys her work, she is struggling with the environment and the subculture. As yet, 'officer' is not a part of her identity; it remains a role she fulfills rather than a core part of who she is.

Alli's frequent use of 'little', 'girl', and 'wear', will become evident throughout the analysis as I share her direct quotes. These are contentious points for her and as such they are the centre of her focus when discussing her lived experience as a female corrections officer. Another interesting note is how much of Alli's language is focused on matters of appearance or femininity vs. masculinity, such as 'dress', 'heels', 'hair', 'feminine', 'female', 'male', 'dominant', 'expected', 'speak', and 'different'. This highlights her struggle with the changes she is facing, and her feelings of being coerced or pressured into making these changes. Finally,

Alli’s chosen pseudonym is not only quite a bit more feminine in sound than Mel’s; she also chose a particularly feminine spelling. This may also be related to degree of indoctrination; that is, Mel has been a part of the male dominated subculture for so long that she – consciously or otherwise – makes choices that reflect years of identity practices directed at acceptance into the old boys’ club. Alli, on the other hand, is new enough to the subculture that such choices are not yet automatic.

During the interviews, both participants discussed their beliefs, demonstrated their values, and told stories of their experiences. When coding their transcripts, I compiled two charts identifying the prevalent coding references evidenced in each of their interviews (see figures 3 and 4). I am going to tell their stories organized by the most relevant coding references, and then tie it together at the end. Of course, their stories often relate to more than one code, which demonstrates the complex interconnectedness of life experiences.

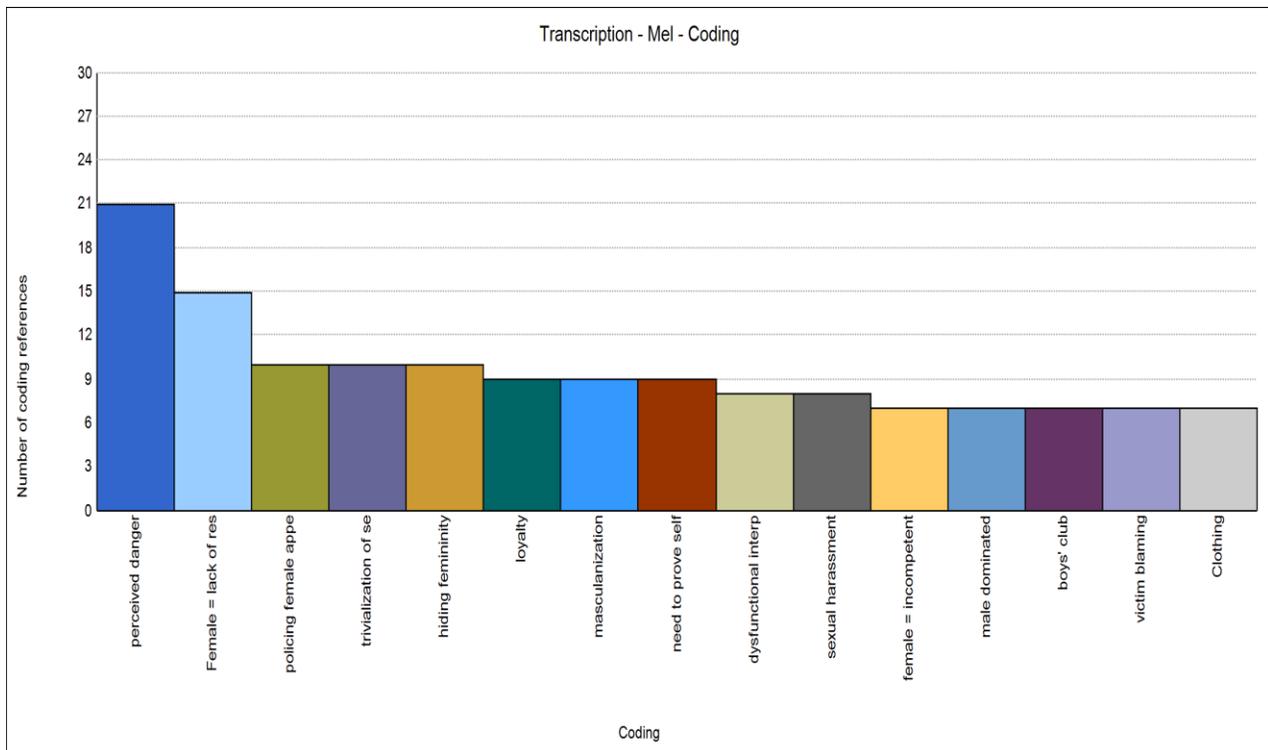


Figure 3: Mel – Prevalent Coding References

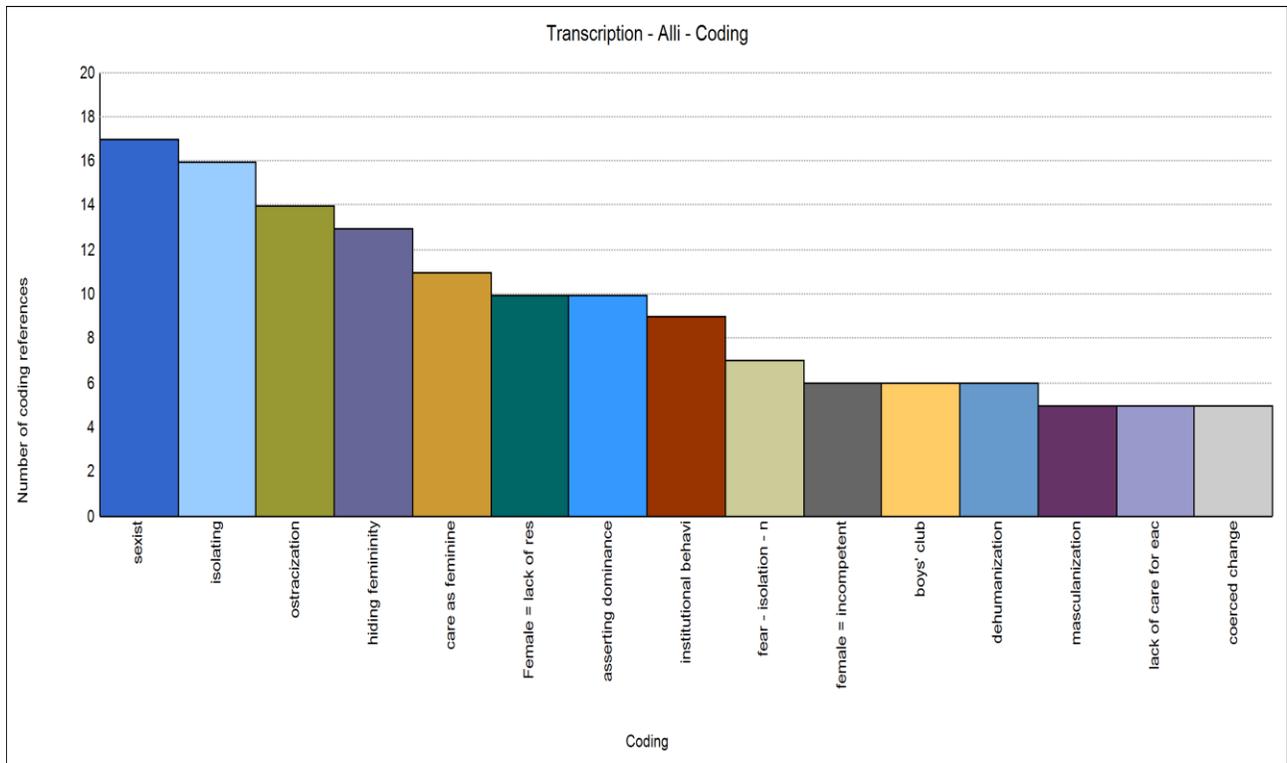


Figure 4: Alli – Prevalent Coding References

Coding References

Perceived danger.

This code is described as the ways in which the participants perceive situations and environments as dangerous. The use of the word ‘perceived’ is not to imply the danger is in any way imaginary or unreal. Rather, it is intended to highlight the concept that situations are perceived various ways, depending on an individual’s life experiences, knowledge, and skill set. For example, being in a rowboat in the middle of a lake without a life jacket will be perceived differently by an individual who does not know how to swim and an Olympic swimmer. Accordingly, Mel and Alli each focused on the types of danger most relevant to their individual lived experience. The types of danger they spoke of included physical assaults, being alone without backup, infectious diseases, sexual harassment, sexual assault, being targeted, being ostracized if you spoke up about sexual harassment or inappropriate behaviour, and death.

Danger of violence from offender population.

Mel spoke of the dangers inherent in working with a population that includes violent and anti-social individuals, many of whom have demonstrated significant disregard for the life and safety of others. She noted that these concerns exist in both the institution and the community.

In the institutional environment, Mel stated that:

...you're extremely, extremely self-conscious of your environment, where you are, where your exits are, where the offenders are, where possible weapons are, seeing all entrances and exits, and where you are safe, where you are potentially in a danger zone.

In discussing the traits she values in an officer, she notes being "fair but firm" as a goal that she tried to live up to everyday. She appreciates this trait in other officers, and talks about her belief that being fair but firm both improves her working relationship with inmates while also improving her personal safety. However, she went on to relate a situation where she quickly realized how little protection this tactic actually provides:

I always felt that so long as I was fair but firm to everybody that they would respect me the same way. We had an incident where we were trying to get them to lock up and it was like a near-riot situation going up and we were going down [the tier] 45 minutes screaming lockup, lockup, lockup, and they were not locking up. If you don't have them locking up within the first five minutes you know you have an incident going on, and I walk out into – I call down into, to go to another unit – and I walk out into the courtyard and they're all screaming out their windows "here piggy, piggy, piggy", "hey bitch", "wouldn't I like a piece of your ass", and you're suddenly realizing in that instant that [it] does not matter how fair I treated them all, in that instant if there was a group of them I would be in trouble.

While some of these comments ("here piggy, piggy, piggy") are directed at her because she is an officer, others ("hey bitch" and "wouldn't I like a piece of your ass") are clearly directed at her because she is a woman. Where a male officer in the same situation would have come face to face with the risk of being physically assaulted and possibly killed, Mel had to come to terms with the additional risk of being sexually assaulted. The idea that her behaviour, no matter how just, would provide her no protection in this situation was a revelation.

When talking about the community, Mel noted the dangers inherent in working alone with limited (if any) backup, stating:

...but when you go to somebody's house... in reality, that's probably less safe than you are at an institution, so being mindful of that... going out to a reservation where you have left your coordinates... "ok, on the fork in the road four street lights in, you know, four light poles in and to the right and, you know, it's a blue house and..." you're in more of an unsafe environment than you are at the institution...

Journal Entry: Friday

I approach the house, nerves on high alert. The calls I had made to the offender, to let him know I was on my way, had gone unanswered. The appointment was scheduled, he knew to expect me, and I knew that this particular family rarely answered the phone. None of this stopped my spidey senses from tingling. He knew I was coming to see the house - to assess his living environment. I pull up in front of his home, narrowly avoiding a stray dog that looks like it hasn't eaten well in months. While I have driven past some very nice, well-kept houses on my way here, this house is not one of those. Windows are boarded up and gang-related graffiti is spray painted on nearby buildings. My stomach is in knots, my muscles so tense they ache. I approach the door trying to keep everything in my peripheral vision, my skin tingling with the feel of unseen eyes watching me. I reach the door and without giving myself time to fret, I lift my fist and hammer on the door. Past experience has taught me that a gentle knock will receive no

response at all. The wood of the door is rough, splintered, and warm under the summer sun. My back is sweating.

Unsurprisingly, I get no response to my knock. I pound again, earning a sliver for my perseverance. Finally, I turn and head back to the car, butterflies in my stomach at having to put my back to the house. I strain to hear any hint of movement; I can feel adrenaline firing through my veins. Suddenly, movement; the door behind me flings open and the offender calls me back. I turn, very disappointed that he was home and I have to continue with this meeting.

He assures me no one else is in the house, certainly not his brother who is a known gang member. He shows me around the house, pointing out his room where he was lying down and watching TV until I arrived. He shows me the rest of the rooms on the main floor, then the basement. As we walk down a hallway past the laundry machines, he states that the bedroom ahead belonged to his sister, but hasn't been used by anyone since she left home months ago. I follow him into the room and immediately my adrenaline kicks up another notch; I am breathing rapidly and everything looks a little brighter. The bedside lamp is on and the blankets on the bed are thrown back as if someone just climbed out of it. Every one of my nerve endings is screaming 'get out of here NOW' and I turn to the offender, stating 'okay, everything looks fine to me, and I have

to get to my next appointment'. He is moving toward the doorway; I move as quickly as I can without appearing to hurry (if I rush he may think I am scared or panicking and that can trigger aggression). I can't let him get between me and the doorway, that is my only escape route, there are no windows in this room. As my adrenaline spikes I fight to keep my voice from shaking, firing off a sarcastic joke about my demanding boss to distract him. I reach the doorway first and head up the stairs; this puts him behind me which is dangerous, but so is letting him in front of me to block the exit. There are no good choices here. I continue to trash talk my supervisor and the 'silly' rules of the organization for which I work, and he responds to this in the way I hoped – as if we are on one side and the organization is on the other. Whatever. I just need to get to the door.

Finally I step outside, say goodbye, and walk in a carefully measured pace to my vehicle. I get in and drive away, only to pull over once out of sight of his house. My hands are shaking so badly that I cannot drive for a few minutes. I get out of the car and walk along the side of the road for a while, doing some deep breathing, processing the adrenaline and getting the shakes under control. Someone else was in the house. Someone he didn't want me to know about. Maybe someone he just needed to hide, like his gangster brother, or maybe someone who intended me harm... maybe they

are one and the same. I cannot shake the feeling that this was a narrow escape, and I get back into the car feeling a hollow pit of hopelessness in my stomach. I slowly drive away, thinking of all the things I should have done differently.

While Mel notes that working in the community can be more dangerous than working in the institution, there is another interesting point to consider here. In the community, working alone, it would seem that the officer subculture would have less impact on the identity practices and behaviours being utilized. In fact, this may contribute to the weakening of the constitutive power of subculture beliefs with time spent working in the community. However, the identity practices and beliefs do not dissipate entirely in the community, despite the lack of an audience. This speaks to the depth to which these practices become part of the officer's identity. The longer period of time for which these practices are enacted and re-enacted, the more entrenched these beliefs, values, and behaviours become, until they are a persistent part of the officer's identity. In Butler's (1990) theory of performativity, gender is "constituted through discursively constrained performative acts that produce the body through and within the categories of sex" (pg. 192). This is not to imply that gender is akin to a costume, although Butler (1990) does use drag as an avenue for problematizing the idea of gender as an essential, stable, embodied fact. Rather, gender is produced and communicated through bodily and discursive practices that are both engaged in, and imposed upon, the body that is taken to represent it. The officer subculture exists in a self-contained world of its own, which supersedes the larger culture very quickly. Being a law enforcement officer, particularly for those entrenched in the subculture, quickly becomes a master status; and what began as identity practices eventually (through enacting and re-enacting the discursive performative acts) becomes, simply, part of the officer's gender

identity. This is not to say that an everyday enactment of a trait considered to belong to another gender will modify one's gender identity. It is the complete immersion in the officer subculture, the narrowing of one's world until all things (and people) in it are part of the subculture, the repeated exposure to physical harm and trauma, and length of time in the subculture that allows these identity practices to become part of one's gender identity. The intensity of immersion and experience in this world – the knowledge that acceptance into the subculture could literally mean life or death – accelerates the formation of a new identity.

Danger of isolation.

While Alli was also aware of the dangers of physical assault, sexual harassment, and sexual assault, the danger that she repeatedly mentioned was being alone, isolated, and having no one she could rely on for back up in the institution. Alli's career did not involve a stint as a correctional officer, so she has no camaraderie built with the officers at the institution. Furthermore, they ostracize her based on a variety of factors, not the least of which is having no uniformed experience. She repeatedly mentions that no one will talk to her or provide her assistance. Her feelings of isolation and ostracization were readily apparent and led to descriptions of loneliness, despair, and social rejection. She often became emotional when discussing these factors, and more than once I checked with her to ensure she wanted to continue to the interview. She was adamant each time that she wanted to go on; much as it clearly pained her to relate her experiences and feelings, she expressed that this story needed to be told. Her state of mind was adequately summed up when she said, "Just from what I've seen, at this point, I don't know who has my back other than myself." She also indicated that she is often referred to as 'little girl' by her male co-workers, even those male officers who are close to her age. While she acknowledges she *could* respond in kind, by referring to them as little boys, she does

not, because "...that's not acceptable. You just don't do that." If she were to do something like this, she fears retaliation in the form of abandonment when help is needed the most, stating "any inmate comes after you, little boy's not gonna help ya. Little girl can fend for herself. Yeah. You won't win."

Journal Entry: Sunday

Sitting on post in the bright sun, surrounded as usual by a few male officers. One is assigned to this post with me; the others are avoiding work. They are chatting, telling 'war stories' about their experiences working in the prison. I am new and certain that much of this is orchestrated to judge my reactions. I fight the urge to squirm; should I be sitting straighter? No, sitting too tall draws attention to parts of my body better kept hidden. I put the post orders I am perusing on the desk in front of me, which justifies my slightly hunched over position. I know reviewing the post orders will be acceptable, and doing so allows me to feign indifference to their conversation without giving offence. I am not retaining a single word I am reading; I am distracted by the crawling feeling of eyes watching me and the vibrating of my nerves just under my skin. I am focused on not allowing this anxiety show on my face. What I wouldn't give to be invisible right now!

"Remember Sara?"

"Uhhh, yeah. Who could forget Sara? Bitch damn near cost officer X his job!"

“Like she was worth his attention, she was ugly and a dyke. Like officer X would have risked his job for her.”

This state of discomfort, where my stomach is rolling and every muscle in my body is taunt, is becoming the norm. Every time I am surrounded by other (mostly male) officers, this happens. I expect it now. I hate it, but I expect it. I know they will shut up faster if I ignore them, so that is the tactic I have adopted. I am not yet allowed to have an opinion so I know my input is not welcome. The key is masking my reactions by restricting my body and facial responses. This is so hard to do. How do I keep my face from flushing? My partner on this post, however, doesn't have these same concerns. As a man, he is relaxed, allowed to join the conversation, and expected to hold similar beliefs. He speaks up,

“What happened with this Sara chick?”

Snorting, one of the officers replies, “she reported officer X for harassing her. Said he was constantly talking about her body and wanting to have sex with her. He was only joking around – trust me, she was ugly as sin and officer X can do WAY better than her – but she couldn't take a joke. Gotta be careful around bitches that can't take a joke.”

I don't have to look up to know there are sidelong glances aimed at me; I can feel the weight of those eyes. Waiting to measure my response. Will I agree with them? Talk about how women can't

take a joke? I am too new, I am sure such agreement will be seen as pandering. And I don't agree with them. I am not sure I could pull off the act. Besides, I've been told repeatedly to keep my eyes and ears open and my mouth shut. So that is what I do; I focus on the post orders and keep my mouth shut.

"Did officer X get in shit?"

Really? Can my partner not just keep his mouth shut? His questions are simply dragging out the torture of this situation.

"Nah, of course not. The boss knows officer X would never be interested in a piece of ass that ugly. Besides, he's had to work with women who can't take a joke, too. He knows they cry harassment for nothing. I heard he told Sara she had better try harder to fit in, and if she didn't have a sense of humour then maybe this job isn't for her. He told her she needed the guys to protect her from the cons, and she'd better not make enemies or the response to her call for help might be a little slower than usual."

My partner snickers. "Yeah, don't bite the hand that feeds you."

I don't know any officer named Sara. Not at this institution.

I get the message, loud and clear.

Danger of sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Mel spoke about the dangers of being female in a correctional environment. She approached this in a number of ways, discussing female appearance and the idea of being

targeted. She also discussed unwanted sexual attention from male officers, with much of her focus being things she did to avoid this. She wore her uniforms two or three sizes too big; she wore no jewelry, limited make-up, and kept her hair in a conservative style; she took whatever steps she could to avoid drawing attention to the fact that she was female. Mel stated, "...I was not promoting my sexuality. I did not want anybody to be looking at me as, um... didn't want any emphasis that way, hide myself in my uniform." Mel told a story of experiencing unwanted attention from a male officer that began with sexual harassment in the workplace but escalated to unwanted attention in her personal life:

I got home and there were flowers left on my doorstep... and I was in a long distance relationship... so I sent him an email and he was like 'no I didn't send you flowers, I don't know what you're talking about,' which was just great, and [I] did not find out who did it. And then [later] we were all supposed to be going for drinks... and... [a male officer] shows up really early to give me a ride, [but]I wasn't accepting a ride, I could walk to where I was going. Then [I] find out that the guy who was showing the naked pictures in his locker was the one who saw me at the grocery store, so had followed me – lovely – to see where I lived and left flowers on my doorstep and that's how he came to pick me up... [to] make sure then that we walk in as if we're going in together. Right? Which would give all of the guys an impression as if I'm with this guy who I was not at all with – did not like at all... really creepy.

By following Mel home from the grocery store in order to find out where she lived, this male officer was not just sexually harassing her, he was engaging in predatory behaviour. This type of behaviour is a red flag with regard to risk for sexual offending. In this case, not only did subculture expectations stop Mel from reporting sexual harassment, it also stopped her from reporting behaviour that could be considered a criminal harassment.

Alli told a story that I would define as sexual harassment, because it made her feel unsafe and targeted in a sexual way, although I believe it would be laughed off as joking within the subculture. She was walking outside from one area of the institution to another, and the weather

was nice with a cool temperature. She walked past a correctional officer working a security post, and:

....he goes “Oh, you a little chilly, eh?” and I’m like “Actually, I’m not that bad”, just thinking he was being genuine, and he goes “Oh, wanna come in the [post] and warm up?” and I’m like “No, no I’m ok. Actually, I’m fine, thanks.

Later, after completing her tasks, Alli heads back along the same path to return to her office in another area of the institution. Alli describes “... walking back out, back down the breezeway, and the same officer I saw at the beginning goes ‘Sure you don’t want to come in my [post]? I’m a little cold’. At this point I’m like, I’d rather freeze.” While this type of joking may be acceptable between friends or co-workers who have negotiated a relationship that includes sexual innuendo or sexual humour, no such relationship existed between Alli and this male officer. This is coming at a time in her career when she cannot get another officer to speak to her in a genuine way; no one will so much as give her directions or help her in learning the ins and outs of her job. Officers either ignore her or offer snide jokes or sexual innuendo. She feels isolated, alone, and at risk.

Female = lack of respect.

This code includes assumptions of incompetence, weakness, promiscuity, relationship status, and sexual orientation; in general, making female officers uncomfortable with the fact that they are female, by calling attention to anything judged feminine or sexual about them.

Ultimately, disrespecting female officers and their abilities simply because they are female.

Both participants discussed experiences that fell into this category. Alli described her first day at the institution and the statements made about her: “I started my first day, it was instantly ‘oh, a little girl started. Got a little girl.’ Instant.” The sheer number of times she mentions being referred to as a “little girl” is overwhelming. I can think of no other industry where it would be

acceptable to refer to a colleague as “little girl”. As noted in the previous section, she is often referred to as “little girl” by male colleagues who are roughly the same age as she is. This seems to indicate that, while her youth and relative newness to the industry may contribute to the use of this phrase, the fact that she is female is the main determining factor. Male officers of her same level of experience and age group do not get referred to as “little boys” by anyone, and should she – a “little girl” – refer to them as little boys, she has significant fears about retaliation.

Alli also notes that she is not taken seriously if she is perceived as “too feminine” and provides the following example:

At work I feel like I’m – if I’m looked at as too feminine, I’m not taken seriously. So, I don’t wear my hair up in a high pony[tail]. Again, I don’t cross my legs, not super soft-spoken at work. I swear like a trucker... I feel like if I was to be soft spoken then I’m not taken seriously, I’m considered whispering, what are you whispering about?

Alli goes on to discuss the traits she feels most officers consider undesirable in a fellow officer.

She immediately identified traits that are traditionally considered feminine:

Yeah, we’re gonna start with friendly again. Friendly, and even just nurturing. Nurturing of anybody... I think anything that’s really feminine, so to speak. Whether you value your family, it’s never talked about. Whether you – like you can’t value your pets. You can’t value the love for your pets.

This idea that anything feminine is undesirable means that, in order to gain respect, women have to demonstrate masculine traits; they have to be the opposite of feminine in order to gain the respect of other officers. Mel discusses a group interaction that occurred early in her career, where she and a number of other new recruits were meeting their union representative for the first time:

... our union rep for our institution came and, again, I was the only female starting and... the union rep talked about... attire [which] was not at all meant for the males because it was... about makeup and hair... and what is appropriate and not appropriate, which was clearly only designated to me. And I left saying “do you think that my eyeliner, like my little, simple, black eyeliner, no mascara, no foundation, no lipstick, nothing else, simply my little eyeliner that I have been wearing since twelve years old, is that too much?”

Why did Mel presume these comments were directed at her? She was the only woman in the group, the only recruit with long hair. It was clear to her that these comments were directed at her. The union representative failed to give any direction that applied specifically to male officers. For Mel, the message delivered was that she was not allowed to present her feminine self in the workplace.

Assumptions of promiscuity/flirting

A number of feminine traits, expressions, and behaviours are seen to be flirting or indicative of the female officer's desire engage in intimate sexual behaviours. Mel noted that something as simple as a change in hairstyle was assumed to mean the female officer in question was looking for a relationship:

Correctional officers who saw the women with their hair down, especially if it was one shift their hair was in a ponytail and then the next their hair is down "why is your hair down, who are you looking pretty for? Is it for them, as a correctional officer, is it for the offenders? Why is it down?" and literally saying that.

Mel also noted that female officers are judged more harshly in this regard if they are young and attractive, stating "the poor female officer starting out is already, you know she already has a mark on her back... if she's really young and pretty she's gonna have a harder go... she's a conquest." Furthermore, she went on to state that this attitude extends beyond male officers:

And the shame is, even for some of the older female correctional officers, they're also just thinking "great, you're going to be after my husband, you're going to be after the guys, you're going to distract all the men. You're going to be a pain in my ass" instead of thinking we need to take her under our wings and teach her how to be a great correctional officer.

Alli noted some behaviours that are considered "too friendly" or flirting when a female officer is interacting with an offender. She discussed that, as a non-uniformed female officer working with some very dangerous and physically strong male offenders, she needs to encourage rehabilitation

without being disrespectful or confrontational in order to maintain her own personal safety. She takes a supportive tone, speaking to them of issues they need to change or address for their own benefit; she expresses concern for their well-being (i.e. working to ensure each of them have a place to live on release from incarceration). However, she worries how this is viewed by other officers, stating “I think they would see it as, kind of, taking him under my wing. Flirting, if you may.” She could limit repercussions by closing the office door when meeting with these offenders, so other officers cannot overhear her conversation, but doing so creates another problem: “Don’t want to close my door though, because then am I being too friendly to him? You’re damned if you do, you’re damned if you don’t.”

Alli notes that demonstrating care for others, particularly offenders, is considered soft and feminine. She talks about one offender she has worked with who sees her as “motherly and nurturing, just from the fact that I don’t... I think I care a little more than others do.” Demonstrating care and concern, being nurturing, are characteristics deemed maternal in Canadian society; and all things maternal are deemed feminine (Canada, 1990; Finley, 2010; Mackie, 1991; Salamon & Robinson, 1987) . When discussing traits that she feels are undesirable within the officer subculture, Alli identifies “...simply just caring about others...”, “...friendly, helpful... anything that will potentially benefit another person”, “nurturing”, and demonstrating love (such as for your family or your pets). All of these things are considered feminine and therefore soft and weak. Mel reinforced this idea of motherly/nurturing being feminine and not acceptable in the workplace when discussing the fact that she had young children when she started in the industry: “...there was very different mom at work and mom at home.” While all parents fulfill their role as parents in a way that is different than they fulfill their role as employee, within the corrections industry this is very specific to nurturance or the

display of care and concern for the well-being of offenders. Despite the goal of rehabilitation being one of the foremost goals of the industry, the subculture expectations are that rehabilitation occurs without nurturance.

Masculinization.

This code encompasses the idea that officers value all things deemed masculine; therefore, to gain respect and acceptance into the subculture, an officer must demonstrate masculine traits and behaviours. Female officers make changes to themselves, masculinize themselves, to gain acceptance (Burdett et al., 2018; Canada, 1990; Ricciardelli, 2017). This encompasses appearance, body language, style of dress, and manner of speaking. In order to analyze what ‘masculinization’ means to Mel and Alli, I want to start by determining what their personal definitions of femininity are. I think it is also important to determine whether Mel and Alli consider ‘feminine’ to be a part of their identity. For Alli, ‘feminine’ means:

... to present yourself in a way that you are comfortable with, but – so for me, personally, I’m feminine at the fact that I look like a girl. But feminine is simply, you can just be feminine with how you feel. In that sense you feel feminine that way, but I also attribute it to how I look. I don’t think everybody does, I don’t think it’s necessary, but I personally do... there are certain expectations to be feminine, whether it’s you do ballet, girls play soccer, you’re soft-spoken, you don’t yell, you don’t swear, you hold your hands nicely, you cross your legs...

Furthermore, Alli stated very clearly that she does identify as feminine, but noted that she tries not to present her feminine self at work. This idea of hiding femininity comes up repeatedly for both Alli and Mel.

Mel also considers herself feminine:

I do consider myself feminine. I think that [being feminine is] being in touch with my sexual identity as well as my mannerism, my... all a part of my being, and I do think that I am feminine. Don’t get me wrong, I can get dirty, I can repair things, I can paint, I can carry a weapon, I was, you know, I’ve gone through self-defence, I’ve gone through those things, but I also cannot hide the fact that I am female and I do think that I am feminine.

Interestingly, part of Mel's discussion of her own femininity is spent justifying this part of her identity. Her justifications include examples of masculine accomplishments or capabilities. Mel feels the need to say '*I identify as feminine but... I am also strong and capable*' as if being feminine and being strong are mutually exclusive categories. Whereas both Mel and Alli discuss attempts to hide their femininity in the workplace, only Mel spends effort justifying femininity. This justifying of femininity is open to at least two different interpretations. The first is that Mel has internalized the subculture to the extent that she sees femininity as a weakness herself and therefore has to add clauses of strength to her identity. The second is that Mel does not herself see femininity as a weakness, but is keenly aware that others do. Therefore, in order to be taken seriously, she has to add clauses of strength to maintain credibility. I suspect these two interpretations intersect and both contribute to Mel's justifications. Furthermore, I believe the technique of justifying femininity develops with lengthier immersion in the subculture.

Moving on to the specifics of masculinization, Mel and Alli both discussed ways in which masculinization has impacted their identity performances in the workplace. Alli specifically detailed the changes she has made to her presentation. Whether that is with clothing:

Just the glitter – people always seem to comment on – “those are some sparkly shoes” “wow, those got some sparkles”. I have another pair of black ones that are just floral lace, comfy – “oh wow, got some flowers on your feet, hey?” So I don't wear either of those, now it's just a plain beige Vans shoe... Dresses? Absolutely. Inside? No. No.

The way she speaks:

I find talking definitely more, um, masculine so to speak. So, I swear; lots of “fuck”, everything like that. Outside, I mean I'll say it, but I'm more cautious of who's around me... especially if there's elderly people you don't say anything like that. I find [in the institution, you're expected to no matter who's there. Whether they're old, young, whether it's a visitor and you're just going in, you're expected to assert your dominance, so to speak, with your voice as well.

The way she sits and holds her body:

Usually just on the edge of my chair, just legs side-by-side. That's it. Won't cross my legs, won't go on my – usually if I stand I, you know, tap my toes a little bit, go back – no. Definitely not. Very masculine, so to speak. Nothing feminine. So, like I won't – usually I sit very straight, in there it's – I find myself slouching a little more. Stand up straight, it's “oh, you look proud today”.

The way she wears her hair:

At work I feel like I'm – if I'm looked at as too feminine, I'm not taken seriously. So, I don't wear my hair up in a high pony... I wore my hair in a high bun the other day, which, it's quick, it's easy... It was “wow, that's quite the bun you got on top of your head” – it's a fucking bun. It's a bun. I have a lot of hair, I put half of it up – oh, put your hair half up hey? Uh huh... like there's no winning.

Or her make-up choices:

Usually, community, full face of makeup. Foundation, eyeshadow, lipstick... Full face of makeup... with my heels, yeah. Institution, it is concealer, just on some spots, a dust of powder, I fill in my eyebrows, and I put some mascara on. Nothing else.

Alli's frustration with this situation was evident in her tone of voice, her language, and her body language. She sees it as so petty and completely irrelevant to her ability to do her job. Her emotions fluctuated throughout these conversations, at times angry and frustrated, at times resigned and hopeless, and often sarcastic. She spends so much of her time focused on how her colleagues see her and what she can do to mitigate any negative perceptions, that it takes more of her energy than the actual requirements of her job. She dreads going to work every day.

Alli is heavily engaged in emotional labour, which Grandey (2000) states may “involve enhancing, faking, or suppressing emotions to modify the emotional expression” (p. 95).

Emotional labour is “the process of regulating both feelings and expressions for the organizational goals” (p. 97). Studies have shown that emotional labour takes a negative toll on the mental health of employees, in a wide variety of occupations, including law enforcement.

Emotional dissonance, wherein the emotion displayed is different (perhaps even the direct opposite) of the emotion felt, has been related to emotional exhaustion (Grandey, 2000;

Hülshager & Schewe, 2011). The amount of emotional labour involved in the work of corrections officers is significant; however, given the identity practices being discussed in this thesis, I contend that there is even more emotional labour being done by female corrections officers than male corrections officers.

Mel also experienced significant differences between her on-duty appearance and her off-duty appearance. She described a situation where her co-workers did not recognize her when she presented her feminine self while attending a function:

I went to a retirement party for a correctional officer for the first time, and my fellow correctional officers honest to goodness did not recognize me because I had my hair done. I was wearing a pink shirt. I mean, I wasn't terribly dressed up, but the fact that I had my hair done so it wasn't just pulled up in a ponytail and it wasn't just the eyeliner... I was wearing capris and a pink shirt and people snubbed me, and it was only afterwards they were like "I didn't realize that was you, you looked like a woman." Yes, imagine that, I looked like a woman. I didn't look like one of the guys.

Many people look different at work than they do on their personal time. The specific issue here is that looking "like a woman" is the difference; Mel is a woman, whether on or off-duty. While she should have the choice to accentuate or minimize her femininity as she wishes, she should never be *required* to look like "one of the guys". Nevertheless, in order to gain respect and acceptance, this is the requirement the officer subculture places on female officers.

Mel also noted that female officers have to monitor the way their clothing fits their body, noting that she wore her uniform two or three times larger than necessary for a long time in order to avoid having anyone take notice of the fact that she was female:

I guess it wasn't ever expected of you, but you're going to set yourself up for more criticism and especially as a big-breasted woman, if you're going to have a tight shirt that your buttons are almost going to be popping, you're gonna be setting yourself up for harassment. I mean, no you shouldn't be, it's not like a set-up situation, but do you want to make it as easy of an environment as you possibly can for yourself, or do you want to be a target. Didn't want to be a target.

This is something male officers do not deal with; in fact, because the physical evidence of masculinity is a coveted trait within the subculture, there are no concerns with male officers showing off their muscularity. Existing research has identified muscularity as a valued symbol of strength and manhood within the subculture (Burdett et al., 2018; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Ricciardelli, 2017). In contrast, evidence of femininity is interpreted as weak, incompetent, and sexual, none of which are valued within the subculture. Mel went on to explain that she had to gain confidence before she ordered uniforms that fit her. I suspect this occurred after she had at least begun to gain acceptance into the subculture; it was not confidence in her own abilities that she had to gain, but confidence that wearing uniforms that fit her body appropriately would not lead to social rejection or increased physical danger.

Mel also discussed the aspect of language, noting that she did not swear much before entering corrections. She tried to maintain this at work, but stated: “they broke me. The correctional officers were extremely happy when they first got me to drop the f-bomb.” She stated that she swears far more with her co-workers than elsewhere. The earlier quote from Alli describing the changes in her language use demonstrates the way swearing is virtually required behaviour for officers. This is a pattern I have seen play out repeatedly; new officers enter the field, working hard to maintain their professionalism at all times. In most fields, professionalism requires clean language and the ability to communicate clearly without resorting to cursing. In fact, in many workplaces the use of foul language is considered disrespectful and completely unacceptable. In the corrections industry, this is not the case. Foul language demonstrates dominance, power, and authority; in short, swearing demonstrates masculinity (Stapleton, 2003).

Mel spoke openly about the desire to be more masculine, especially at the beginning of her career when she initially thought maybe that would make her work life easier:

You wish you could be... I'm sorry it's a horrible term, but it comes to mind... you wish you could be butchy. It's not a nice term, but you really wish you were – I wish I was, you know, six-foot-two, big girl, that nobody would mess with. Mind you, though, that comes to mind – there was a girl who was that way, [and] they messed with her far more than they messed with me. Messed with her far, far more than they messed with me.

This is another damned-if-you-do, damned-if-you-don't situation; female officers who are not masculine enough face social rejection, but female officers who are too masculine face sanctions as well (Canada, 1990; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Sasson-Levy, 2003). As noted by Schippers (2007), women embodying features of hegemonic masculinity “challenges the hegemonic relationship between masculinity and femininity” and results in these women being “stigmatized and sanctioned” (p. 95). Such pariah femininities are subject to various labels, such as ‘slut’ (if their sin is promiscuity), or ‘bitch’ (if their sin is assertiveness). As Mel notes above, sanctions flow just as freely when female officers are too masculine as when they are not masculine enough. The construction of women who are seen to be ‘too masculine’ as homosexual (by labelling them as lesbians or dykes) is yet one more method of policing femininity. Schippers (2007) notes that being sexually attracted to other women is one of the “practices or characteristics that [is] stigmatized and sanctioned if embodied by women” (p. 95). This sanction is required to support the relationship of subordination-dominance between femininity and masculinity. If women can possess the same traits and utilize the same practices as men, where is the basis for male dominance? Therefore, the policing of female sexuality is used to position women who challenge gender norms as ‘other’ and as discreditable. To gain acceptance into the officer subculture, female officers must balance precariously between hegemonic femininity (too feminine) and pariah femininity (too masculine). Landing on either side leads to sanctions in the form of social rejection and exclusion from the subculture.

Asserting dominance, gaining acceptance, and the need to prove yourself.

In order to belong, to fit into the androcentric subculture, officers are expected to assert dominance in virtually all situations, even when doing so is not actually necessary. Failure to assert dominance means the officer is weak and does not belong. This sort of social rejection, particularly in an environment with such a strong sense of brotherhood and camaraderie, is a powerful motivator (Burdett et al., 2018; Prokos & Padavic, 2002; Sasson-Levy, 2003). Alli described it this way:

I think it's – I think it's the hunger of wanting to be in charge. At the end of the day I genuinely think that's what it is. [No matter the environment], from what I've seen it's – they're power hungry. Especially in a male institution that you have to show that you're more powerful than the 6'8 guy. No matter what, you have little man syndrome and you need to show them you're in charge. But even those who are weaker, so to speak, you need to show them that you're in charge, regardless of the fact that they already know.

This theme of dominance continued when I asked Alli what traits she thinks officers value in their fellow officers:

I think dominant. Dominant – I think they want you to be dominant, whether you're a male, whether you're a female, regardless – you're expected to be dominant... showing who's better than who. Who's bigger than who. And the whole – they have each other's back. I think, I think they value knowing who has their back... they like the whole – dominant, dominant, dominant. You can never be submissive, so to speak. Like you always have to show that you're just – you're 6'8, yeah well I'm 6'9. Like you just have to always one up them.

For Alli, this proved quite the conundrum, since her authority is constantly undermined by her male colleagues calling her a “little girl”. They would do this even when talking to offenders, which destroyed any hope she could have of asserting dominance:

I heard the officers in the control post say to one of the inmates “there's a little girl here to see ya”. Way to help me assert my dominance with someone. Way to just explain me as the “little girl”. They knew who I was; [I told them] I'm just here to see [this offender] as I got his inmate request that he wanted to have a meeting. Still I'm the “little girl”, and now I've got [all the officers] watching me.

While not the focus of this study, situations like the one Alli described above also single her out as vulnerable and indicate to the offenders that she is different than – and maybe isolated from –

other officers. This is a dangerous situation for Alli to be in, as it may identify her to offenders as a potential target for compromise. She worries that she will never be accepted, and if that is the case then she will be isolated, alone, and unsafe throughout her career: "...if you're feminine you're not good enough, you're not a bitch, you're not dominant, you'll never be one of us, then you're on your own. It worries me." Such a concern for her personal safety is a strong motivator to make whatever changes to her identity are required to garner safety.

Mel also discussed this need to gain acceptance into the officer subculture, and noted that the starting place is different for male and female officers:

Well it's because you have to prove yourself a whole lot more as a female in a male dominant world. Criminal Justice as a whole, I feel that is still very much a male-dominant role and you really have to prove yourself, that you are equal to them and you're not just given it. I started with two other male correctional officers that I even went to college with, went through [training] with, did everything the same with, but they were automatically accepted. I had to prove myself. Once you prove that you can do the job, then you're accepted, but it's not just given to you. When you start as a male correctional officer it's given to you unless you prove that you don't know what you're doing, then you've lost their respect, but as a female you have to prove that you know what you're doing because it is automatically assumed that you don't until you prove it.

This same fact was noted by the female corrections officers interviewed in the study conducted by Burdett et al. (2018). Female corrections officers begin their career from a different starting place than male officers. This relates directly to the fact that traits traditionally seen to be masculine are valued in the subculture while feminine traits are devalued. As a result, women must prove they are more masculine than feminine in order to gain acceptance. The subculture holds traits and behaviours such as strength, aggression/dominance, physical prowess, suspiciousness, decisiveness, and violence in high esteem (Burdett et al., 2018; Ricciardelli, 2017). Mel describes a number of situations in which she was called upon to demonstrate these traits, and notes that it was the fact that she behaved in a masculine fashion that led to her acceptance in the subculture:

I used OC spray [similar to pepper spray] in segregation and was respected for it. Another incident where they were asking for all available correctional officers, and I was an available correctional officer so of course I responded to an incident where an offender was beaten into a vegetable... within three weeks back-to-back I was in two inquiries because I was a responding officer, but, to the other correctional officers, I was “in” then. I was one who had your back, they knew I had their back, I was a straight-up correctional officer, and I was respected. I was in.

Mel’s use of aggression, combined with the strength and loyalty she displayed by running into a dangerous situation along with male officers, gained her social acceptance into the subculture.

She goes on to note that female officers must maintain their masculine performance every single day, as an “off day” will lead to social rejection:

...female correctional officers, if you were the one who was not responding you will always be a step down and you can never regain it. If you have not stepped up to the plate, you can never, ever, regain it. You cannot have an off day. It does not exist, especially for a female correctional officer, it does not exist. In a very male dominant – I was in an all-male facility – so you have to prove yourself and you have to be there.

For male officers, having a bad day is acceptable. This does not mean there are no repercussions; Mel talks about two male officers who failed to respond when ‘all available officers’ were called to an incident, and she notes that they were less respected than more capable, responsible officers. However, they were not excluded or ostracized to the same extent as female officers would be in a similar situation. My experience on the day of the near-riot, outlined in an earlier journal entry, provides another example of this differential response to negligent correctional officer behaviour.

Alli’s point that dominance is often exerted unnecessarily is an important one. Inmates in a correctional facility or on conditional release are well aware of who is in charge, and unless there is dissension or insubordination there is generally no need for an overt and forceful demonstration of authority. However, the subculture insists that power and dominance, toughness and physical prowess, are required to hold a position at the top of the hierarchy

(Burdett et al., 2018; Ricciardelli, 2017). This insistence on always being in power results in displays of masculinity and dominance where it is not strictly necessary to gain compliance, but is used instead to reassert dominance over inmates who previously bested the officer in some way. As an example of these types of situations, Mel described:

When you see the correctional officers that planted a shiv in somebody's cell because they are going to get even with them, it's like, it just – that guy is not going to get day parole now, you know, you just messed with him. “Yeah, well he messed with me”. Like it's a game. You're gonna play this game for the next thirty years of your career? Like, I want nothing to do with you. Right? And you see that. Or the guy that says “oh, you know what, you're gonna take it... I'm gonna escalate it up here because I'm so much bigger than you because I wear a blue uniform”.

These situations are clear examples of abuse of authority. While the subculture emphasis on dominance does not cause officers to behave this way, it may be a contributing factor. Most officers in the corrections industry are people of integrity and their own ethical code would not permit such behaviour. However, as with all positions of authority, people who simply want to have power over other people are also attracted to this line of work. A few of those inevitably make it into the industry. The idea of ‘getting back at’ an offender who has previously wronged or insulted you in some way may be appealing to this type of officer. In those situations, the subcultural emphasis on displaying dominance only contributes to their desire for revenge. Furthermore, if we return to the idea of complicit masculinity, a similar effect exists within the subculture. For a variety of reasons, not the least being an unwillingness to look weak or be labelled a ‘con lover’, officers who would never engage in such unethical behaviour themselves remain silent in the face of such abuses of authority. In this way, the subculture not only contributes to the occurrence of abuses of authority but also encourages the persistence of such behaviour.

Hiding/justifying femininity and coerced change.

Both Mel and Alli spoke about various ways they tried to hide their femininity, outlined above under ‘masculinization’. Alli presents a completely different identity at work than she does when off-duty; she wears minimal make-up, restricts her hairstyle, changes her style of dress, even restricts her use of colour in accessories, pens, and her fingernails. She sits differently, stands differently, and speaks differently. She hides the things she cares about in her life, feeling as if she can’t even put a picture of her pet up in her office as she will be considered too nurturing and therefore feminine; soft and weak. In discussing these changes, Alli became quite emotional. Tears flowed as she talked about refusing to change some things – *refusing* to, taking a stand – but then admitting that she does not know if she can continue the resistance:

I don’t want to wear my hair in a pony[tail]. I just don’t. I don’t wear my hair in a pony[tail]. I shouldn’t have to wear my hair for how my coworkers accept me. Most people [in the institution] have short hair, I’m not gonna cut my hair. I refuse to cut my hair. I’m at the point where... you want to call me a little girl, blah blah blah, sure. Fine. Whatever. Eventually you’ll realize I know what I’m doing... and then I’ll get the respect [and] I [won’t] feel like I have to change anything.... [but] by that time, I don’t know what else I’ll have changed. At this point I still get my nails done. Will I in a year? I don’t know. I want to think I [will] because I’ve had my nails done the last eight years... Yeah, but I mean I know that I might [stop getting my nails done]. I’ve gotten them shorter than what I did before. I got them painted sparkly this time, but it’s like a nude pink, and the sparkles [are] easy to hide. They’re not long or in your face. I like white nails – [but] I’m not gonna get white, because that is “in your face”. So, I don’t know.

Despite her insistence on continuing to get her nails done, she noted that she hides her hands when at work, by keeping them inside of long sleeves or keeping them under her desk. She is resisting the pressure to change, but the coercion she feels causes her to try to keep her nails out of sight as much as possible. Her tone at the beginning of this discussion was forceful and angry, resonating with stringent resistance. However, as she continued talking about the changes she has already made and found herself admitting that she might give in and change those last few bits of her identity she is clinging to, her tone changed. She sounded sad, hopeless, and resigned.

She sounded like she had given up. She is afraid of losing herself; afraid that she will be remade, into what the subculture wants, and the Alli she knows and loves will cease to exist.

For Mel, hiding femininity was directly tied to not wanting anyone to notice she was female and to her perceptions of danger. She talked about “setting yourself up for harassment”, not wanting “to be a target”, and “not promoting my sexuality”. Mel’s language tended to put responsibility squarely on the shoulders of the female officer for any repercussions that came of demonstrating their femininity. Not that she agreed that this was right; she clearly stated that it should not be this way. However, she still reverted to language that implied female officers were the ones who had to minimize these risks by making personal changes. There are hints of victim blaming in the language she used, and in the idea that women should be taking steps to make themselves less appealing as a target for harassment or abuse. I know Mel did not intentionally choose her language to sound this way. I know that she does not actually believe women are to blame for their own mistreatment. I know this because we have discussed such matters in the course of our work. Which only makes the way this language keeps percolating to the surface of her statements more interesting; I believe it is evidence of her indoctrination into the androcentric officer subculture. It serves to demonstrate how insidious subculture beliefs are, and the way in which they come to influence all aspects of one’s life (consciously or otherwise).

However, Mel also explicitly justified femininity and its inclusion in the corrections industry. She explicitly stated that femininity does belong in the corrections industry and explained why she feels this way:

We don’t have to be like “oh, we all have to be more masculine”, you know? We don’t have to be that way, and in fact, there is a lot to say that being feminine and being a little bit more gentle at times... can make a big difference. And we’ve seen in corrections that having females in institutions actually gives a little bit of normalcy into the institution, and it actually takes the edge off and we actually de-escalate some of the situations. A lot of it is like “you know what, I’ve been missing my sister, my mom, my girlfriend” and

it's not a sexual thing, it's just that somebody's actually just bringing it down a notch. It's not a bad thing. And then over time in the community you start to also realize... [and] as you get older and your offenders seem to get younger you start to take on a role as mom. You really, really do, and in some cases relationships just change and it's okay to be feminine in corrections. We don't hear that, nobody says that, and it actually is, it really is okay.

This demonstrates Mel's internal struggles; she has internalized the masculinization of the officer subculture, yet wants to stand up for femininity at the same time. She knows that feminine traits are not worthless, that there is value to these traits when working with offenders in a corrections environment; yet, at the same time, her indoctrination leads to her to minimize or subvert her own femininity and that of other female officers. This contradiction supports the deduction that her use of 'victim blaming' language is subconscious.

Sexism/sexist harassment.

Many of the aforementioned topics clearly represent sexism, which permeates the officer subculture. Sexist harassment, defined as *generalized sexist remarks and behaviour, not necessarily designed to elicit sexual cooperation, but rather to convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitudes* (Robinson, 2005), is very common within the subculture. Not only is sexist harassment regularly engaged in by male officers, but female officers also use it against one another. Sexist harassment permeates the interpersonal relationships between coworkers such that it extends to interactions that have nothing to do with the job. Alli highlighted this when talking about driving her partner's truck to work one day:

I drove my boyfriend's truck to work. I got out of the truck, it's just a standard truck. It doesn't have a lift kit, nothing like that. An officer – the first thing [he] said to me, [he was] at [his] vehicle as well, first thing he said to me is “Hm. That's a big truck for a little girl, hey?”

Aside from the recurrence of the disrespectful moniker 'little girl', this scenario demonstrates sexist harassment occurring in a mundane interaction between co-workers. Between referring to

her as ‘little girl’ and implying that she is not competent enough to drive a ‘masculine’ vehicle, this officer has insulted Alli for no reason other than existing as a woman who drives a truck. However, female officers encounter sexist harassment so regularly within subculture interactions that it quickly becomes the norm. Mel talked about the prevalence of sexism in the industry:

You know what, you probably see it almost every day at the institution, but sadly it also just becomes a part of the environment. Off-handed remarks, you know, the female correctional officer can make the coffee, can do the little “wifey” things. Or that the correctional officer – the *male* correctional officer – should be protecting the female officer – or go completely opposite, and let’s give all the shit jobs to [the female officer]... so one extreme to the next, either protect or no, either we’ll do everything or no, you do everything, let’s see how you handle this... you know? Off-handed comments [about] anything from your shoes to barrettes, you know? Heaven forbid you have a different coloured barrette in your hair or a different coloured elastic in your hair, not just the black elastic.

This differential treatment of female corrections officers is designed to highlight their difference; specifically, to identify them as “the feminine other” (Schippers, 2007) and certainly to “convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitudes” (Robinson, 2005). Mel’s statement that sexist harassment just “becomes a part of the environment” is evidence of the normalization of such behaviour and the ensuing desensitization of female officers to such behaviour.

Preoccupation with relationship status/sexual orientation.

Officers frequently and repeatedly ask about the relationship status or sexual orientation of female officers. As Alli stated:

Yeah, everybody has actually asked. Even the females. Like “Oh, so you married?” and I’m like “oh no, no”... everybody asked... they’re always...
“Oh, so, you married?”
“Nope.”
“Ah. Engaged?”
“Nope. I’m Not.”
“You gay?”
“No.”
... everybody assumes that I’m already married, and I’m like no, I’m not...
“got kids?”
“nope, don’t have kids”

“oh. Having kids soon?”

“No. Again, *still* not married. Since our last conversation, not married.” They instantly assume that I have a kid, I’m married, at least engaged, or I’m gay apparently.

This persistent questioning about her relationship status causes Alli discomfort, making her feel that she is defined by her relationship status and/or sexual orientation. This focus is degrading, as it implies that Alli’s value as a human being is dependent on her attachment to another.

Combined with the sexual innuendo/harassment that will be described in the next section, it communicates that her worth is limited to her potential to be a sexual partner. She is worried about befriending her co-workers for fear that her friendships will be misconstrued:

I don’t want to know [my co-workers] outside of work because ok, we hang out, I think we’re friends, “Oh, Alli, you’re sleeping with him?” “No...”, like, it’s just...you can’t win. You never know. Especially, [say] you become family friends with somebody, “Oh, well your boyfriend [is] away, why don’t I come over and help you while he’s gone?” where’s that going to go? I don’t want it to follow me outside of work.

This quote illustrates that Alli does not feel comfortable with her co-workers. She is constantly afraid of being judged, which restricts her from making friends. This lack of connection with her colleagues only increases her feelings of isolation.

Sexual harassment.

For purposes of this study, sexual harassment is defined as *any physical, visual or sexual act experienced by a person that is focused on the person’s sexual identity which makes them feel all or any of the following: embarrassed, frightened, hurt, uncomfortable, degraded, humiliated or compromised; which has the further result of diminishing a person’s power and confidence* (Robinson, 2005). Many of the everyday acts of sexism/sexist harassment that occur within the corrections industry come close to crossing the line into sexual harassment. Sexual innuendo or suggestiveness is rampant in the subculture, as evidenced in the situation Alli described where she was repeatedly offered the opportunity to ‘warm up’ with a male officer. Another situation

found Alli temporarily using a communal office, when a male officer entered to find her there. He saw her, closed the door behind him, and asked if she was waiting for him. She said no and explained why she was there. Despite having no apparent reason to be there, he remained in the office observing her. Alli quickly became uncomfortable, feeling watched and awkward. The officer then suggestively stated, ‘well... you’re in my office, you must be waiting for me.’ Alli immediately perceived sexual innuendo in his words and tone, and her feelings of discomfort and danger persisted until she was no longer alone with the officer. Ironically, she felt relief upon the arrival of the offender she was scheduled to meet with, stating “I never thought I’d be so happy to see an inmate.”

Mel related a few different scenarios that clearly meet the aforementioned definition of sexual harassment. Each of these left her feeling “uncomfortable, degraded, humiliated or compromised” and certainly undermined her power and confidence:

I’ve had the guys who opened up their lockers and they have all kinds of nude pictures [hanging] on there [and] have been like “hey Mel, what do you think about this?” and I’ve been like “I think you’re a pervert and I couldn’t give a rat’s ass”, but they’re just trying to get a rise out of me. Right? But then they take it further, because then they’re gonna take their fingers up on the pictures and make it more vulgar and try to get more of a reaction... I’ve been in [a control post] with people I’ve even gone through [training] with, gone through college with, that I’m in the same [control post] with, and we’re all in there having coffee, talking, and to have a correctional officer just out of the blue say “Well you must want to get raped. If you’re here, you must be willing to be raped.” And nobody said boo, nobody came to my defense, nobody said anything.

Victim blaming is prevalent in sexual harassment and sexual assault situations, wherein the victim is held responsible, at least partially, for their own victimization (Gravelin, Biernat, & Baldwin, 2019). Often, the victim’s behaviour (use of drugs or alcohol, limited resistance, situational placement) or appearance (attractiveness, clothing) are identified as ways the victim placed themselves at risk or brought their victimization upon themselves (Gravelin et al., 2019). “You must want to get raped” is the epitome of victim blaming. Imagine it: here is Mel, in her

uniform that is two or three sizes too big, wearing her hair in a utilitarian ponytail despite the headaches it gives her to do so. She has gained acceptance into the subculture by asserting dominance, using violence, and demonstrating her solidarity by backing up her fellow correctional officers. She is sitting with her brothers in blue from whom she believes she has earned respect, and one of those brothers says to her "...you must want to get raped". Simply for doing the same job he does, in the same environment. *He* does not want to get raped, yet he is there. How can he logically believe that Mel does? There is a belief in the officer subculture – a myth that statements like this only further perpetuate – that men are unable to control their sexual behaviour if they are deprived of sex for a significant amount of time. Mel noted this belief when she said, "...initially you're thinking 'oh, I'm in an all-male institution and these guys have not been around females and I shouldn't be so...'” feminine. This idea that men cannot control their sexual behaviour if they are either sexually deprived or excessively aroused is simply an excuse for assaultive behaviour, and it exists in the larger Canadian society as well as in the officer subculture (Kanin, 1985; Ryan, 2011).

Mel's inability to respond to this statement, her moment of complete and utter shock, is all too familiar. While the specific assumption of her desire to be assaulted was at least partially responsible for her surprise, simply being faced with blatant sexual harassment (beyond the normalized sexist harassment of the subculture) often results in a moment of indecision. Perhaps the female officer chooses not to respond at all, knowing she will face social rejection if she responds in a way seen to be an overreaction. Or maybe she is trying to decide how to respond, trying to come up with an adequate response that will put a stop to the situation without jeopardizing her social acceptance into the subculture. Finally, she may simply be stunned and

unable to formulate a response of any sort in the limited moments wherein a response would be expected.

Journal Entry: Tuesday

I've been doing this job a few months now, and this is still one of the parts I hate the most. I am sitting in a communal office with all the other living unit officers, waiting for the mid-day count to clear so we can move on with the rest of our day. I am the only woman present, along with seven male officers. A couple have chosen to sit in the back office, away from the group, working on some paperwork. Of the five male officers sitting in the room with me, four are senior to me in both rank and time in service, and one is a guy I went through correctional officer training with. We have exactly the same amount of experience. I sit in uncomfortable silence, having been explicitly and repeatedly told to keep my 'eyes and ears open and mouth shut' for at least the first two years of my career. Not so for my male colleague of identical seniority and rank; he is allowed to speak and joke with the others. Granted, he is teased and taunted quite a bit for being new, but he is permitted to participate. I am not.

The four senior officers start reminiscing about a house party they attended together, at the home of yet another officer. They describe loud music, lots of booze, and lots of female interaction. The women in attendance – those deemed attractive –

are described in lurid detail. Those deemed unattractive are only mentioned derogatorily. Before long, the tale focuses on one particular female officer. She was “hot” and “looking for action”. She was also “completely shit-faced”. They described interactions with this woman, talking, dancing, getting very close to her, and her responding in kind. In short order, one of the officers has taken her to a bedroom.

I continue to sit in uncomfortable silence. I am pretending to be unaware of the conversation, but I don't really think anyone believes this. I notice, as the story progresses, that the most lurid of statements are accompanied by sidelong glances in my direction. I hold myself still, lips clamped together, knowing I will suffer significant repercussions if I intervene in this conversation. All I can think is, ‘come on, clear the count already, I want to get out of here’. No such luck.

The officer telling his story proceeds to describe his sexual interlude with this woman in graphic detail. I fight to keep my face from flushing; I desperately need to be uninvolved and nonchalant. Then the officer turns to his partner and says, “how was she after I was finished?” Laughter all around, but then the second officer describes his sexual activities with the same woman. At some point, he mentions that she is barely conscious, seems to be passing out intermittently. They all laugh; they know she wanted all of them,

they are the “hot” crew. Third officer jumps into the story, and the vulgarity only increases, jokes about “sloppy seconds” abound. By the time the fourth officer is involved, the woman is unconscious. They finish, and leave her lying, naked and ‘asleep’, on the bed in someone else’s house. They laugh and joke about how embarrassed she was afterward, they call her a slut and say that she had to transfer sites. My colleague, the guy I went through training with – the one I beat in both arrest & control training and firearms training – was laughing comfortably along with them. He genuinely seemed to find this story entertaining.

So, this is how they see us... see me. I can feel that unknown woman’s pain and humiliation. I feel like I have bathed in filth; I want a shower. I know that these men see all women as they saw that female officer, sluts who want nothing more than the chance to have sex with them. I do not feel safe around these men. I stay still as a statue, gazing off into the distance as if I couldn’t even hear them. Hoping and praying my face does not reveal the complete and utter disgust that is churning my stomach. I fight not to vomit. I am cold and clammy. I am terrified. I want to cry for that unknown woman. I can’t cry. I see the sidelong looks, waiting for my reaction. I want to scream at them, call them rapists – the lowest of the low – but I don’t. I sit in silence. I do not call them on their behaviour. I do not tell anyone about their behaviour. I can’t. If I

do, I am not solid. If I am not solid, I am a rat, a goof. I will be isolated, alone; I will have no back up when I need it. I feel sullied, dirty; by listening to their levity in telling this tale, I have contributed to that unknown woman's pain. To her assault. I judge myself guilty.

Saturday

It has been eleven days since I sat in that office and heard that tale. I have revisited the scene in my head infinite times; I now realize I was being tested. Would I say anything to management, or would I prove to be solid? I feel the deep shame of having proven solid. Today I sat in that same position, in that same office, with many of those same officers. One of the officers involved in my previous torture began to tell another story, one that was obviously going to be morally and ethically questionable. Another officer shushed him, nodding his head toward me. It was very clearly a 'don't talk in front of the new chick, we don't know if we can trust her' kind of motion. The officer telling the tale said 'you don't have to worry about her. She's solid.' And that was it. I had passed another test. Was the original story even true? Or was it completely fabricated to test me? I have no idea. I am confused, disillusioned, and frightened. I do not want to work with these men.

I do not want to be alone in an office with these men. I am not safe with these men.

I go home angry. I assault my husband's punching bag until I am exhausted. I go to bed early and cry myself to sleep. I do not tell my husband this story. I predict this story is one of many I will choose to keep to myself throughout my career.

Sexual violence and denial.

For purposes of this study, sexual violence is defined as *a violent act of a sexual nature that violates the sexual integrity of the victim* (Edmonton Police Service, 2019). What was described in the tale above (if it actually occurred) was an act of sexual violence. Regardless of whether it related fact or fiction, the tale served its purpose: to silence me, to test me, and to put me in my place, definitively and unambiguously. Direct experience with sexual violence was limited among the participants of this study, but Mel did speak to a situation that crossed the line:

I've heard of other correctional officers – and I guess I wondered at one point, like one correctional officer says “oh, do you find that when you're getting all of your equipment... we have a couple of correctional officers – male correctional officers – that have got a little bit too close, as if it was more of a sexual assault? But I didn't – it's like, I gave thought to it, but I really did not feel that it was intentionally that way, but I guess if you really gave thought to it you could also go the other way and say ‘yeah, that was probably a little bit more close than needed to be’. But if I don't feel harmed I guess I'm not harmed. Is that – you know? But I can see where there could be situations where that can certainly be the case, [and] I do know that as a female correctional officer, there would be more than one time that... you start to feel as too many [officers] come in you sort of get a line, you'd rather be at the back of the line...

Mel's comment in the above quote, “but if I don't feel harmed I guess I'm not harmed” is representative of denial. My lack of response to the tale I had to listen to on that random Tuesday afternoon, and my refusal to address the emotional damage done by that situation and others like it, is the result of denial. I did what I needed to do to prove myself, to gain

acceptance, and once accepted I spent years changing myself in subtle, often subconscious ways to be able to function within a subculture that was slowly but surely eroding my identity; changing me, making me into something compatible with the entrenched beliefs and behaviours of the officer subculture. These changes in the behaviours and beliefs of female officers, along with the active denial of harm, only serve to reinforce and perpetuate hegemonic masculinity and the more toxic ideals that exist in hyper-masculine environments (Sasson-Levy, 2003).

Trivialization of sexist/sexual harassment.

While denial could be considered a way to minimize the effects of behaviours, trivialization of sexist or sexual harassment is far more common and blatant within the officer subculture. Most often this is evidenced by the assertion that the perpetrator was ‘only joking’. When asked if she had experienced sexual harassment, Alli replied, “No. Not – I think harassment, so to speak, it wasn’t directed at harassment, it was joking around because even the females would say it, like just jokingly.” Yet there had to be some component of these jokes that was either sexist or sexual in nature, or why would she have mentioned this in response to a question about sexual harassment? Perhaps this is once again tied to the concept of harm – these were jokes, not meant to cause her harm, therefore they cannot be sexual harassment. Yet Alli also noted that ‘joking’ is the readily available and always accepted excuse. She referred back to the officer who asked her into his post to warm up, noting:

A guy wears just his sweater, one of the guards wore just his sweater, why don’t you pick at him at the fact that he’s cold, ask him to come into your [control post]? But they say it in such a way that I could go to whoever and say this [officer] said this to me, and they’ll be like “well he was just asking if you were cold?” but no.

Again, we see dissonance here – there is a struggle going on within Alli. She allows the idea of ‘just joking’ at times, but at others she is able to see that ‘joking’ is simply an excuse for inappropriate behaviour. Some of this is related to in-group/out-group tolerance and the

tendency to allow statements and jokes that might otherwise offend you if they were made by someone outside of your social group (Van Zomeren, Fischer, & Spears, 2007). Slowly, over time, the number and variety of instances that Alli accepts as ‘just joking’ are going to increase, and the fewer and fewer situations she will see as sexual harassment. This desensitization increases as officers spend more time immersed in the subculture, leading to the trivialization of sexually harassing statements and behaviours. This desensitization perpetuates the idea that *some* women take everything too seriously, too personally, and have no sense of humour. *Those* women are the ones nobody trusts.

Mel has touched on this in earlier statements, such as when she said “... I personally have had some instances that came really... you would think that it’s minute...” and “...you probably see it almost every day at the institution, but sadly it also just becomes a part of the environment...” Mel excuses many of the verbal expressions as the result of the environment:

... it’s because of the environment... take some of the conversations, which seem extremely alarming and disturbed conversations that [we] will have staff-to-staff, because it’s a coping mechanism. We’ll say some really off-the-cuff comments that if anybody – normal human beings in the normal business world – would think that we are twisted. Well we are, because it’s in the environment.

In my experience, Mel has a valid point. Even extending beyond our fondness for dark humour as a coping mechanism, we tend to discuss traumatizing events as if they are everyday occurrences because, in our world, they are. Many of the traumatizing events we witness or experience have sexual components to them, and we find ourselves turning to humour as a way of processing the trauma. Other emotions are not permitted as they are a sign of weakness; as an officer I once worked with and greatly respect said, “there’s no crying in corrections”. So we laugh. We make inappropriate jokes. Sadly, this coping mechanism has the unhealthy effect of increasing desensitization, which contributes to trivialization or minimization of statements and

behaviours that really should be seen as problematic. In addition, this acceptance of dark humour and the accompanying desensitization make it very easy to disguise harassment as humour and avoid repercussions, as Mel describes:

And sadly, what it produces is an environment that, you know what – because there could be a couple of comments that... are not hurtful, are not derogatory, even in a certain context, is not derogatory, and everybody has thought that, it was funny. That it was fine. And so truly, that even though in a normal environment might find it – but that's ok. However, it can very easily go over the edge. It can cross the lines, and because of that, if somebody is getting truly sexually harassed, like you know, sexual assault – it has happened. We've created an environment where – how does that person come forward?

Even Mel's use of the phrase "truly sexually harassed" implies that there is imaginary sexual harassment and then *real* sexual harassment. This differentiation is prevalent in the officer subculture, and Mel is right in saying that it creates an environment where victims are unable to come forward (LeBlanc, 2014).

Lack of whistle-blower protection.

The corrections industry as an entirety is lacking in effective whistle-blower protection. As described in my scenario with the crew of male officers detailing a group sexual assault, taking any sort of action that could lead to discipline or corrective action will only lead to ostracization and social rejection of the officer being harassed. Remember the young woman with large breasts I mentioned, who quit four months into her career? She first tried to ignore the ongoing sexual comments, then she tried to use sarcasm, and when these tactics were ineffective, she finally went to her supervisor. After that point, when everyone knew she had 'ratted out' the offending parties to her supervisor, she was finished. It took very little time for her to realize it and leave the industry. Word in the grapevine was that she was stuck up, high on herself, and couldn't take a joke. That she thought all the men wanted her and made up stories for attention. I do not believe any of that; I sat with her too many times while she cried about the things I heard

them say to her for me to believe any of it. But you know what I didn't do? I did not stick up for her. I could not, not without facing the same consequences. I chose to solidify my position within the subculture rather than defend her. This is another of those actions that I am not proud of; another little piece of myself the subculture took from me.

Mel discussed this when talking about the officer with the nude pictures in his locker, stating:

... his locker was in segregation, so smaller, not like it was in a main building where everybody else's locker was, right? So, he had a really controlled environment, and even made comments of how he had gotten in shit for – like you can't do this in the big building, because, you know? But, also controlled environment in which, OK, so for me and the two other correctional officers in there, if anybody reported it, it would be known who did it. Right? And on top of that, you don't have... a complaint box... no, if you have a complaint against one of your fellow officers, it is not a private complaint. It is very much a very open complaint. You have to pony up, and yes, this is a complaint against – because it's their career.

While Mel's point about the serious nature of a complaint alleging sexual harassment is valid, the fact remains that lack of protection for the complainant has been shown to decrease legitimate allegations (LeBlanc, 2014). Alli also discussed the intolerance of disclosure that pervades the subculture, noting that the idea of 'ratting' someone out is pervasive and facilitates the continuation of harassment:

But then, of course, you can't say anything because you're just looked as the rat, or the goof. Which you hear even in [the control post] – "oh, don't want to be the rat", "oh, [Alli] you don't want to be a goof"... or else you won't get into there. You'll never make it. If you're a rat, you're done. You might as well quit, go away.

Mel further notes that the idea of 'ratting' someone out extends beyond sexual harassment and beyond gender, noting "I've seen a correctional officer who rightfully reported bad correctional officers who were in the wrong and the harassment he felt, he had to switch institutions to continue his career, and he never should have been in that situation." The situation she described happens in regard to abuses of authority or negligence of duty, where an officer's integrity

requires they take action despite the subculture norm of 'no ratting'. However, as happened with the officer Mel spoke of, the officer who acts ethically generally suffers significant consequences while the consequences to the offending party appear minimal in comparison (LeBlanc, 2014).

Application and Expansion of Sasson-Levy's (2003) Theory of Identity Practices

I commenced this study to explore the extent to which Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices applies to female officers in the Canadian corrections context. In order to do this, I explored the world of the officer subculture, and how this subculture impacts female officers. I believe the lived experiences of myself and my two participants demonstrate the use of all three of the identity practices identified by Sasson-Levy (2003), and further, that these identity practices contribute to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture. Additionally, the lived experiences of Mel, Alli, and myself demonstrate the ways in which hegemonic masculinity can act as a destructive force within the subculture.

Mimicry of combat soldiers' bodily and discursive practices.



Figure 5: Image of Jami Albright-Tolman, 2005

Sasson-Levy (2003) used this identity practice to encompass all of the ways in which the appearance and discourse of female soldiers changed upon their entry into androcentric roles in the military. In order to demonstrate that they were good enough, that they belonged, female soldiers began to mimic male combat soldiers. They changed the way they dressed as well as other factors about their appearance, the way they held their bodies, the way they walked, and the way they talked. The interview data outlined above provides ample evidence that Alli and

Mel undertook similar modifications to their identity presentations. As with the soldiers in Sasson-Levy's study, Alli and Mel recognized their submersion into a male-dominated environment wherein all things feminine were deemed worthless. So Alli stopped wearing make-up and jewelry; Mel wore her uniforms much too big and put her hair in the utilitarian ponytail. Alli changed her posture, the way she positions her body when sitting, and what she does with her hands; Mel demonstrated aggression and engaged in violence. Me? I wore my hair short and my uniforms too big. When I left the uniform, I wore unisex clothing like jeans and t-shirts or khakis with a men's button down, also worn too big, and certainly no 'feminine' colours. I wore no jewelry; for a long time, not even my wedding ring. I adopted a fierce handshake – I heard repeated jokes from male officers about women and their limp handshakes, clearly a sign of weakness, and to this day I am regularly told that I shake hands "like a man". My stance aimed for casual yet observant, with my thumbs hooked into my front pants pockets. Not my entire hands, just my thumbs – easier to get your hands up in a hurry in case you need to defend yourself. I walked with focused purpose, often being told I looked like I was "on a mission". I swore constantly, and since I could not manage to deepen my voice, I worked hard to adopt an authoritative tone that I have been told more than once sounds "bitchy" and "bossy". I only used my voice as required to do my job, reporting to other officers or directing the actions of offenders. I did not use my voice to defend other women in the industry when they needed, and deserved, defending. I did not call male officers out on their inappropriate sexual language and behaviours. I kept my eyes and ears open and my mouth shut. I did the best I could to imitate the male officers around me, while taking every opportunity to demonstrate that I was, in fact, good enough.

Interesting, though, the need to be masculine but not *too* masculine. My appearance upon entering the industry often led to questions around my sexual orientation; I was referred to as a “dyke” or as “butch” more times than I can count. My short hair was regularly attributed to my sexual orientation; prior to entering the corrections industry, no one had verbalized such comments or assumptions. Upon learning that I was not gay, the next question was inevitably “why is your hair so short then?” This is another example of the “damned-if-you do, damned-if-you don’t” issue for female officers, particularly early in their careers. Don’t be feminine, but don’t be too masculine either; don’t be weak, but don’t be too strong; don’t promote your attractiveness/sexuality, but don’t be a prude.

This on-duty presentation is very much a “stylized repetition of acts” that is “produced through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and styles of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self” (Butler, 1990). Alli’s situation reveals this illusion for what it is; temporary, situational, and oftentimes uncomfortable. She has yet to internalize the changes in her gender performance, which only highlights the very performative nature of gender identity. She is very feminine when off-duty, but chooses not to enact femininity while on-duty. For Mel, her on-duty and off-duty performances of gender have begun to merge such that she is no longer shifting entirely from one identity to the other; rather, she has incorporated masculine components into her gender identity while still adamantly identifying as feminine. However, this does not mean she has fully integrated these two parts of herself; her struggles are apparent in her attempts to justify femininity while still engaging in masculinization: “...I do think that I am feminine. Don’t get me wrong, I can get dirty, I can repair things, I can paint, I can carry a weapon...” The gender role dichotomy is clearly represented in the idea that it is okay to be feminine as long as

one is still strong and capable. The problem is not Mel being feminine *and* strong; the problem is her need to explicitly state this because both our society and the officer subculture equate femininity with weakness.

Distancing from traditional femininity.

While I did not use this specific language in my interviews, engaging in masculinization of the self requires distancing from traditional femininity. Alli's efforts to hide her femininity while on-duty represent her efforts to distance herself from traditional femininity. As yet, Alli does not judge other women for being too feminine at work; rather, she notes that this becomes acceptable with increasing years of service, "I've seen one with longer hair. She's been there twenty years. She's accepted, she's allowed to have long hair." In my experience, Alli's unwillingness to judge other women for signs of femininity is likely to be eroded as her years of subculture immersion increase. For Mel, wearing her uniforms too big was an attempt to hide the embodiment of her femininity. Regularly, officers engage in negative judgements of women who maintain practices of hegemonic femininity within the corrections environment.

Journal Entry: Tuesday

I sit in the lunchroom, eating with a few of my close colleagues. An officer enters the room and immediately I feel the excitement he is exuding; he has something he wants to say. He interrupts the flow of conversation, saying, "hey, have any of you guys seen Susie this morning?" Susie is a non-uniformed officer who works in another unit, but we all know her. No, none of us have seen her since arriving at work this morning; really, there would be no reason for us to. This officer is very eager to continue his tale,

and goes on to say, “it appears there have been some changes during her holidays... **big** changes,” and with the emphasis on ‘big’ he gives a chuckle full of sexual innuendo. To me, his meaning is clear – Susie has changed something about her appearance.

“What are you talking about?” asks one of the guys at the table. The officer states that Susie’s breasts have at least doubled in size while she was off work. He goes on for a bit, describing the size, shape, and perkiness in quite a bit of detail. I sit, saying nothing, but both awkward and bored with this conversation. The guys start talking about how she was always “kinda pretty” but was so tall and skinny that she had no shape. Now she would look “like a woman”. But in short order, the conversation turned to the tightness of the shirt she was wearing today, along with high heels with her dress pants. The men insisted this meant she was trying to be sexy, and that started the inevitable discussion about who she wanted to be sexy for. I said nothing in her defence. I sat in silence, gradually moving from dislike of the conversation to finding myself agreeing and thinking that she must have some external motivation for looking attractive. As a woman who was taught to hide my body in corrections, I found myself thinking the same way as the male officers around me, “why would you want to look physically appealing here? Who are you doing it for? Are you trying to pick

up one of the officers, or do we have to watch you around the inmates now?”

As the day progressed, Susie’s behaviour and appearance were the hot topics of conversation. She spent time at various control posts, chatting with male officers. This was dissected as ‘new’ behaviour that accompanied her change in appearance. She was clearly looking for male attention. Except... I don’t actually know if this was a change in behaviour. Maybe she always spent time in certain control posts, because the officers working those posts were her friends. Given the disproportionate number of male officers, virtually all of us have more male work-friends than female. None of this matters though; what matters is that she dares to flaunt her femininity and that must mean she is on the prowl. I never want to be this weak, sexualized, incompetent creature. This is why I dress the way I do, act the way I do.

As outlined in the above journal entry, I engaged in distancing myself from traditional femininity. I was quickly indoctrinated into the subculture such that I actually believed growing my hair out or wearing make-up made me weak and incompetent. Competent female officers did not waste their energy on their appearance; rather, they focused on becoming the best they could possibly be at the job.

If in fact Susie had breast augmentation surgery while on holidays, her actions may have been directed at increasing her standing in the hierarchy of femininities; she was engaging in complicity with hegemonic femininity (Finley, 2010; Schippers, 2007). While the men I worked

with did not value hegemonic femininity in their on-duty partners, they absolutely valued it in their intimate partners. Their gossip about Susie's breasts and her assumed desire to secure a relationship with a man detracted from her status within the subculture while at the same time increasing her feminine status and value in the off-duty world. This is an important factor. Susie's actions, to accentuate her physical embodiment of femininity, are indicative of agency and power. If her actions are viewed outside the hierarchy of a multiplicity of femininities, all of which are context specific, then her agency and power are rendered invisible (Finley, 2010). The officer subculture actively erases women's power and agency by insisting there are only two options for female officers: competent and masculine (something of a pariah but at least trustworthy and a valuable team member) or feminine and weak (but valuable in the context of hegemonic masculinity as a high-status sexual partner). The one is valued on-duty but scorned off-duty, while the other has significant value off-duty but is seen as flighty and useless in the male-dominated workplace.

As female officers negotiate their on-duty identity, they must chose between 'feminine but useless' and 'masculine but undesirable'. For those who choose 'masculine but undesirable', belittling all things traditionally feminine is one technique to assist in achieving the compulsory masculinization. If you are one of the guys, then you have to engage in the old boys' club behaviours. Distancing oneself from traditional femininity by creating an 'us' (competent, masculine officers) against 'them' (weak, feminine officers) dichotomy is an effective way to both differentiate oneself from femininity while further ingratiating oneself into the social fabric of the subculture.

Trivialization of sexual harassment.

While Alli was able to recognize and identify sexual harassment in some situations, she was either unable or unwilling to do so in others. For example, when talking about sexist joking in a community setting, she stated, “No. Not – I think harassment, so to speak, it wasn’t directed at harassment, it was joking around because even the females would say it, it’s like oh, like just jokingly.” Some of this is tied up in her perceptions of working in the community, where she felt welcome and accepted:

I looked at the community like a family – not in the community, I mean even the offenders were great in the community. They never commented on the fact that I was a woman, I was never referred to as a little girl in the community. I had a name outside. I was a person. I was much more than the little girl.

This quote brings up two important points; the first being that inappropriate ‘joking’ is tolerated by those in the in-group. If the group making such jokes, even when the jokes are at the expense of women in general, is a group to which the female officer belongs, all of a sudden these are perceived as *only jokes* and of no consequence. However, when the female officer is in the out-group, such jokes serve to further isolate, ostracize, and cause harm. This perception is skewed; in reality, harm is caused anytime such joking occurs. These jokes further promote stereotypes about hegemonic femininity and oftentimes support rape myths or victim-blaming attitudes, and when they are permitted to proliferate without consequence they lead to attitudes of trivialization (Robinson, 2005). When women engage in the trivialization of sexual harassment, they are contributing to their own subordination (Sasson-Levy, 2003). The fact is, even when the female officer has successfully masculinized herself enough to gain acceptance into the officer subculture, she is still not considered equal to male officers. By trivializing the sexual harassment that is rampant in the officer subculture, these female officers are condoning such behaviour.

The second point is that Alli feels muzzled, unwelcome, and dehumanized since moving from the community to the institution. When she says, “I had a name outside. I was a person” the pain in her voice is palpable. She often closes her office door to avoid being overheard by other officers, as she feels her conversations will be judged negatively. She refrains from saying anything in response to the insults she receives, like when she talks about how she cannot respond to “little girl” comments by using the phrase “little boy”. Instead, she feels pressured to say and do nothing about the situation for fear of being labelled and suffering further social rejection: ““oh, don’t want to be the rat” “oh, [Alli] you don’t want to be a goof”, ok, sorry, I guess I’ll shut my mouth, grab my stuff, and go”. This muzzling happens because female officers cannot respond in a way that they would in another environment; they must methodically plan a response in order to achieve the desired result – acceptance to the subculture without too much loss of self. Mel talked about this inability to respond when her co-worker stated she “must want to get raped”. She noted that her inability to respond was not like her, stating “...I’m not really a silent person.” Other than being shocked, Mel was unable to identify her reasons for not responding. Sasson-Levy (2003) contends that by responding “to sexual harassment by being insulted and hurt, [female soldiers] confirm the discourse that the harassment itself is trying to create, which constitutes women as sexual objects” (p. 455). The female soldiers were engaging in resistance by refusing to acknowledge sexual harassment. However, by ignoring or minimizing incidents of sexual harassment, female officers allow the proliferation of sexual harassment at a systemic level. By not responding to sexual harassment, the female officer is solving a personal problem at the expense of a systemic one (Sasson-Levy, 2003). She keeps her place as ‘one of the guys’ and maintains her acceptance in the subculture, but allows the sexualisation of women within the subculture to continue.

Temporal and situational nature of identity practices.

Alli noted that she engages in specific identity practices around her physical appearance, speech, and body language while working in the institution that she used neither when working in the community nor when off-duty. Mel has noted that years of experience and getting older have contributed to changing her perceptions on these matters. For myself, I believe there is a time limit on how long one can continue to present an identity that does not truly fit who they are. I believe this because I have been living this struggle for a few years now, and this thesis project is one result of that struggle. Do I still engage in the inappropriate joking, the kind that devalues femininity or trivializes matters of sexism or sexual harassment? Yes, sometimes I still do. The subculture beliefs become ingrained, and as much as they may not fit me well they have become part of me. However, I catch myself (and others) far more often than I used to. When I do become consciously aware of it, I say so. I talk about what is wrong with the situation and why this cannot continue. Sadly, there are still times that I do not even realize what I have said until someone else, someone from outside the subculture, points it out to me.

Sasson-Levy (2003) identified these identity practices as situational and temporal. This may be connected to the short duration of military terms of service, particularly in Israel where every citizen is required by law to serve for a specified period (three years for men, two years for women). When Sasson-Levy returned to interview some of her participants one year after they left the military, she noted that the identity practices they had engaged in while serving were either greatly diminished or entirely absent (p. 448). Due to careers in corrections spanning as much as 25 – 30 years, these identity practices become much more entrenched in female corrections officers. With Alli being relatively new to corrections and Mel having worked in the industry for more than a decade, the differential depths of indoctrination as corresponds to time

in service become evident. For example, while both Mel and Alli showed some desensitization to sexual harassment, along with acceptance of the 'just joking' discourse, such behaviour was significantly more normalized for Mel than for Alli. Other aspects of their identities also corresponded to their time in service; Mel was reluctant to make gendered generalizations, whereas Alli was more willing to do so. Mel used language that emphasized the identity of officer, whereas Alli's language emphasized both her identity as feminine and the policing of female appearance. Mel's perception of danger focused almost entirely on the dangers associated to a job working with dangerous offenders, whereas Alli focused a great deal on the dangers associated to social rejection and isolation. Finally, with a greater number of years in service, Mel felt the need to justify femininity as being both beneficial and necessary to the corrections environment. Alli is so immersed in trying to maintain some aspects of her identity that she has not begun to consider justifications for the presence of femininity. Alli is just trying to survive day to day, whereas Mel is secure enough in her social acceptance to begin questioning some aspects of the subculture.

The length of time female corrections officers spend immersed in the subculture result in varying degrees of internalization of these identity practices. Therefore, while I conclude that female corrections officers use the same identity practices as Sasson-Levy (2003) identified with female Israeli soldiers, I do not believe they possess the same temporal or situational limitations. The identity practices female corrections officers utilize gradually seep into their personalities and become an enduring part of their identities. While these identity practices may diminish over time, as Mel noted there are simply some ingrained attitudes and behaviours that never go away.

How these identity practices reinforce hegemonic masculinity.

Sasson-Levy (2003) argues that these identity practices have a “dual meaning” in the context of the Israeli military where her study was situated. On one hand, she sees these identity practices as subversion of traditional gender roles because they demonstrate that those traits of value to the military are *not* gender-specific. In fact, if women can dress, speak, act, and perform their duties in the same ways as men, what justification is left for denying women full acceptance into military culture? Sasson-Levy further notes that these identity practices disrupt the socially constructed connection between female (body) and feminine (gender construct). By doing so they help to highlight the artificial and arbitrary nature of the gender binary. These women artfully construct an identity that is neither male nor female, and the performative nature of this identity practice clearly exposes the spectrum along which gender identity exists (Butler, 1990).

On the other hand, Sasson-Levy (2003) notes that by engaging in masculinization of their identities, these female soldiers are conforming to the gender role stereotypes that exist within the military culture. Their acceptance of the idea that only masculine traits have value is evidenced in their embodiment of those very traits. They are reinforcing the message that femininity does not belong in the military through their bodily and discursive acts.

By delving into the lived experiences of my participants, I have revealed an image of the officer subculture that is predominantly masculine. Each participant has engaged in bodily and discursive practices that only reinforce the masculine ideals that dominate the subculture. Although Mel intentionally and verbally justified femininity and its place in corrections a number of times, she also included her ability to be masculine in her personal identification as feminine. She believes femininity has a place in corrections, but she also needs to clarify that she is feminine *and* strong, competent, and capable. This implies that she does not see these traits as being included in the conceptualization of feminine, which contributes to the

constitution of femininity and womanhood. Hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture is very clear about what traits and behaviours are of value: strength, toughness, physical prowess, pragmatism, aggression, violence. Through the use of social rejection/ostracization as a sanction, the subculture is able to police female appearance, discourse, and behaviour such that most will conform to the subculture expectations of masculinization. Those who don't are rejected from the subculture; they exist on the outskirts of it, rather than within it.

Are these identity practices in fact subversive at all? I think not; in reality, I think women are simply conforming to the masculine ideal. Female officers are reinforcing hegemonic masculinity as they continue to play by the same old hierarchical rules, rather than insisting on a new playing field. In the officer subculture, hegemonic masculinity remains the pinnacle of social success. And only male officers can truly enact hegemonic masculinity. But let us consider emphasized femininity, as per Connell's (1987) definition: a form of femininity that is grounded in subordination and centered around development and valuing characteristics of value to men (p. 188). Connell was referring to traits that are valued by men in the general context of Western society, such as vulnerability, fragility, desiring marriage, being sexually receptive, and becoming a mother (Finley, 2010), but I would argue that the traits that are of value to men change with the context. The alternative term used by Schippers (2007) identifies hegemonic femininity as "the characteristics defined as womanly that establish and legitimate a hierarchical and complimentary relationship to hegemonic masculinity and that, by doing so, guarantee the dominant position of men and the subordination of women" (p. 94). Combine these definitions, and emphasized/hegemonic femininity involves remaining subordinate, enacting traits and practices that are of value to men, and engaging in a relationship of male/female characteristics that is both complimentary and hierarchical.

The identity practices used by female corrections officers to gain acceptance to the subculture only reinforce their own subordination and devaluation. While female officers are definitely engaging in a relationship of male/female characteristics that is both complimentary and hierarchical, they are most definitely not enacting hegemonic femininity. However, they are not fully enacting pariah femininity either, because the right amount of masculinization does not lead to stigmatization in the officer subculture. (R. W. Connell, 1987; Finley, 2010; Schippers, 2007). Prior to acceptance, this masculinized femininity is stigmatized (i.e. the masculinized female officer is initially referred to as a “bitch” or a “dyke”). At this stage of the process, they fit Schippers’ (2007) definition of pariah femininities. However, once the female officer has gained acceptance into the officer subculture, the stigmatization is removed. At this point, Finley’s (2010) description of the conversion to alternative femininity has occurred.

What would true subversion look like? Most likely varied and multifaceted, depending on your perspective. Consider the earlier noted imaginary of the crystal; what you see when you look upon it depends upon the “angle of repose” (Richardson, 2000, p. 934). Perhaps it is easier to consider what true subversion would *not* look like. It would *not* look like women being muzzled, afraid to speak for fear of being sanctioned socially or endangered physically. It would *not* look like women trying to hide their identities, or being coerced into changing them for the sake of acceptance. It would *not* look women turning on other women, or staying silent in the face of injustice, for the sake of self-preservation. And it most certainly would *not* look like sexist or sexual harassment or sexual violence.

Conclusions

Limitations

This study lacks generalizability due to the small sample size. While this may be seen as a limitation by some researchers, generalizability was never the goal of this project. I have taken Sasson-Levy's (2003) theory of identity practices and applied it to female corrections officers. I suspect this theory of identity practices is further transferable to other androcentric work environments. On its own, this study does not provide enough empirical knowledge to promote evidence-based change within the officer subculture. What it does do, however, is provide sufficient evidence to justify a larger scale mixed-methods study to determine the generalizability of these findings.

The specific method of purposive sampling utilized in this study also negates generalizability. I interviewed female officers I know; ones I have worked with or interacted with over the course of my career. This may mean that our experiences are more similar in nature than would be the case if my recruitment efforts went farther afield. However, the exhaustive and emotional nature of the interviews included in this study would have been far more difficult, if not impossible, had my participants been strangers. Also contributing to similarity of experiences, all the participants in my study have both community and institutional experience. Additionally, all participants' institutional experience occurred within all-male institutions of the same security level, housing offenders with similar profiles. This may have led to some homogeneity in the types of officers working at those institutions, detracting from the diversification of the officer experience. Finally, my involvement in the research process may have influenced the specifics of the information disclosed by my participants, either in content or in framing. My identity both as a member of the subculture and as a colleague may

have shaped the information my participants chose to share. While this could be framed as a limitation, I believe this familiarity created an environment of acceptance and support that fostered a safe place in which my participants could tell their own stories.

All of my participants are Caucasian. Given the limited number of female officers in the industry to begin with, the fraction of female officers that are ethnically diverse makes accessibility a challenge. Regardless, it would be of significant interest to search out the experiences of women of colour in the industry. Finally, all of my participants identify as cis-gendered heterosexual women. Given the prevalence of using sexual orientation and derogatory terms such as “dyke” as a method of humiliation and insult within the subculture, there may be significant value in exploring the identity practices utilized by officers who identify as something other than cis-gendered and heterosexual. Such officers are in even more limited supply, and may be more difficult to identify, than officers of ethnic minority groups.

One final limitation to this study can be found in my decision to interview only female officers. I made this decision because I wanted to investigate the lived experiences of women in the industry. Along with determining the applicability of Sasson-Levy’s (2003) theory of identity practices, I also wanted to see what meaning my participants made of their experiences and how that impacted their identities. The goal was for my participants’ experiences to direct the path that this research project would follow. This was partially motivated by a gap in the literature; I found very little research that explores the lived experiences of female corrections officers in any depth. I also wanted to give female corrections officers a voice, without constant interjections of the male perspective. Female corrections officers have knowledge and perspective that stems from their social position within the officer subculture; their standpoint is unique from that of male officers and I wanted to consider that standpoint without dilution or

distraction. That being said, any endeavour to see actual change within the subculture will require an in-depth look at the lived experiences of male officers as well.

This project has focused quite heavily on what many people will see as the negative aspects of the officer subculture. I want to take this opportunity to discuss the positive aspects of the subculture, in order to provide some balance to the representation this paper has brought forth. The fact is that the corrections industry presents a highly atypical work environment in many ways, and coping with it requires a subculture of closely-knit officers. One of the coping mechanisms shared within the officer subculture that is both positive and effective is the use of humour. Humour is a very healthy way to process negative emotions, and dark humour is seen by the subculture as an effective and acceptable coping mechanism in a dark environment (Gayadeen & Phillips, 2016). Interestingly, not all research agrees on this point. Some studies show that lighthearted humour is an effective coping mechanism, but that dark (or “gallows”) humour indicates officers are not coping well with secondary traumatic stress (Craun & Bourke, 2015). Regardless, within the subculture dark humour facilitates bonding and allows expression of emotion without the negative connotations that usually accompany emotional expression.

One of the main positive attributes of the officer subculture is camaraderie. Working in the corrections industry comes with a significant amount of physical and emotional danger to which all officers are subject. The loyalty to one another is one way we battle the physical danger. When you have to walk down a tier housing anywhere from 25 to 50 inmates, most of whom seriously dislike you because of the blue shirt you’re wearing, it is vitally important to have someone you trust watching your back. When you have to conduct a supervision meeting with a violent offender who is likely to be angry or unstable, you need a partner you can rely on to respond appropriately and with enough force to ensure you both go home safe at the end of the

day. This level of trust does not come from simply knowing that another officer has the appropriate training. It does not automatically happen because a bureaucratic decision process has designated that person an officer. This level of trust must be earned. It comes with time, and evidence of reliability and capability. It rivals the trust many people have in their intimate partners; trust that you would throw yourself into danger to help me get out of danger. As this level of trust increases, loyalty and camaraderie build, and an effective correctional unit is the result.

Future Research

A number of areas that could benefit from further research were highlighted during this project. To begin with, how often does the public ostracization or social rejection of a female officer correspond to episodes of compromise? In Alli's case, other officers regularly referred to her as a "little girl" either when talking to offenders or where offenders could overhear them. This designation obviously lacks respect, and sets Alli apart from other officers. In my work experience, being denied access to a post by a senior officer who was supposed to be training me was also a public rejection witnessed by the inmate population. Compromise of staff that results in contraband entering the institution, institutional and/or criminal offences going unreported, and intimate relationships burgeoning between staff and inmates is a significant problem in the corrections industry. Attempts have been made to address compromise throughout the history of the correctional system, with only partial success. Research into any correlation that may exist between social rejection of officers and officer compromise may provide a new avenue for fighting staff involvement in rule infractions and criminal activity.

Secondly, the parallels between the offender subculture and the officer subculture is an area for future research. In the offender subculture, a 'rat' is barely a half-step up the hierarchy

from sex offenders, who are the least respected and most targeted of the offender populations. 'Rats' are not loyal, and will 'snitch' on another offender to save themselves. Such behaviour is seen as both cowardly and a betrayal. The common phrase 'snitches get stitches' depicts the consequences for 'ratting out' another offender. However, the idea that reporting on injustice makes an *officer* a 'rat' and therefore not worthy of respect or acceptance into the subculture is completely contradictory to the goals of the job. Like all law enforcement officers, corrections officers are expected to fight injustice, to right wrongs, and to defend the weak. So how did we get from fighting injustice to identifying an officer who takes action against sexual harassment as a 'rat'? There are ties to the use of sexual harassment and sexual assault to "express and reconfirm the public and private positions of hegemonic masculinity within a heterosexualized gender order" (Robinson, 2005, p. 20) that need further investigation.

Thirdly, does the emphasis on dominance and physical prowess over de-escalation skills and nurture have a negative affect on offender rehabilitation? Rehabilitation requires offenders to address their cognitive, emotional, and social deficiencies in order to change their attitudes, values, and beliefs to match those of pro-social society. Throughout the correctional process, offenders are expected to make positive changes such that they no longer present a risk to public safety. Part of the job of a corrections officer is to model appropriate, pro-social behaviour, in order to assist and encourage offenders to make these positive changes. If offenders are surrounded by officers who demean and devalue women, who rely on bullying and brute force to accomplish their goals, and who disrespect those different from themselves, how can they learn new behaviour? In this situation, the persistence of the attitudes and behaviours that characterize the officer subculture actually detracts from rehabilitative efforts and interferes with the industry achieving its foremost purpose: protecting public safety.

As Alli points out, these subculture beliefs exist throughout all levels of the corrections industry:

... management is the issue too. Management is just as entrenched in the whole thing as the guards are. Because the guards become management. The guards become management, the parole officers become management, and from what I've seen parole officers are usually – were guards at one point. So, you have essentially, guards managing at the end of the day. From what I've seen? Never good. Not good, because they believe in the bro code, and you have to be a part of the bro code to be ok.

The report from the task force on barriers to women in the public service (Canada, 1990) confirms the accuracy of Alli's perception that the 'old boys' club' persists into management and the executive level. As legislation has changed to reflect a greater emphasis on human rights and non-discrimination, so have corrections policies and best practices. However, while the *policies* passed by the executive level and enforced by management may espouse gender equality, the *behaviour* of those filling the executive and management positions often do not. Remember the supervisor who reportedly told Sara to learn how to take a joke or find a new job? His attitude and behaviour persisted, despite changes in policy and legislation. These attitudes and behaviours will not change without a concurrent subculture shift. Therefore, there is a need for further research into the entrenched attitudes and behaviours among managers and executives that contribute to the perpetuation of hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture. It has been 29 years since the report from the task force on barriers to women in the public service (Canada, 1990), and very little has changed.

Finally, there is need for large scale, quantitative research into the ways in which women working in law enforcement in this country are negatively impacted and held back by the officer subculture and its ingrained 'old boys' club' beliefs. This type of research is necessary to convince governments to invest time and money into significant change. While this research project has significant value in determining what types of issues exist within the officer

subculture and *why* those issues need to change, quantitative research that backs up conclusions with statistics is required to inform policy decisions and identify *how* to implement such change.

Final Thoughts

Does the subculture need to change? There is no doubt that the officer subculture plays an important role in a very dangerous, atypical, and traumatizing work environment. An officer subculture can be highly beneficial in such an environment; however, there is strong evidence that the current configuration of the officer subculture is ineffective and damaging. Yes, the officer subculture needs to change. But how do we accomplish that change?

I asked both Mel and Alli this question. Mel stated:

...as much as, when we talk about feminism, we tend to be feminists... women are the ones who are pushing for the change, and what actually needs to happen is... we need to have all sexes on board. So, it needs to actually be that when you're in a [control post] and somebody is saying "you must be willing to be raped", then it actually has to be another male needs to say "that's not cool, you can't say that. I wouldn't want you to say that to my wife, I don't want you to say that to my sister in blue, because it doesn't matter. Brothers and sisters, we're all in blue, we're all equal. Don't say that. If you won't say that to me, don't say that to her." Because that's when we're going to start seeing the change, because as much as we want to say, "you know what, I am woman, hear me roar", we've been saying it a long time. We've been roaring a long time and we need our brothers, our husbands, our bosses, we need them to not be saying "well, we need to keep a little woman happy". No. You need to stand beside me. You don't need to put me up, you don't need to step me down, you need to stand beside me. That's how we will become equal is for us to stand beside each other. That's what needs to happen. But it takes time. I don't know how long it's going to take...

Alli stated:

I think the mentality of a rat needs to go. I don't want to assume, but I want to say that men aren't subject to the same harassment, based on the fact that there's more of them, and women aren't as accepted into their subculture, I'll call it. I think the whole "rat" needs to be – you shouldn't be a rat for saying what's wrong. I don't understand where that even started. I think that's where it really needs to start. I think [the industry] says yeah, we'll accept women – first, you shouldn't accept me based on the fact that I'm a woman. You fill out their application, "Are you a woman? Do you identify as a woman?"... why isn't there one that says "Do you identify as a man?" Why is the fact that I have a vagina a question? Why does that matter? If I meet the credentials, hire me. If I don't, don't hire me. It's that easy. I don't scroll through anything and say "oh, are

you a male?"... they don't have to answer that question.... I think simply just having things even, so to speak, and I think a male and female should work together. You could walk into some units and there is not a single woman in sight... okay, yes, males are considered more dominant based on the fact that their stature is much bigger than typically that of a female's. That I think is great from a safety point, so to speak. Depending on who you're with. A female typically gives off a little more nurturing. Whether you have kids or don't have kids, typically women are looked at as more nurturing because they're looked at as mom. I don't think it's bad for a man and a woman to work together, considering then the inmate will get both sides. You can't screw around, but we care.

What do I think? Mel and Alli both make excellent points. In an environment where the opinions of men have significantly more value and more power than the opinions of women, it is vitally important for men to make a stand. One based on the concept of human rights for all, regardless of gender identity. The corrections industry employs many honourable, ethical men whose integrity precludes them participating in sexist/sexual harassment or sexual violence. I have worked with and been mentored by male officers who treat women with respect and believe them to be equally as capable as men. These men are negatively impacted by the hegemonic masculinity of the officer subculture as well. They are just as coerced to be complicit in the dominance of men and the subordination of women, and I have no doubt they suffer consequences as a result. In this way, hegemonic masculinity harms all officers, both male and female.

Officers who are courageous enough to report sexist or sexual harassment, or sexual violence, need to be supported by their fellow officers. All officers within the subculture must hold one another accountable to a much higher standard than we have been settling for thus far. As the officers who make up the subculture fight to change on the front lines, working from the bottom up, we need our executives and managers to work from the top down, and meet us in the middle. We must demand this change of our organizations.

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Appendix A: Interview guide

Living the Code: How the identity practices of female corrections officers reinforce hegemonic masculinity in the officer subculture

Please note: throughout this interview, the focus is on your perspective – your thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences... most importantly, what those experiences mean to you. At times I will be asking generalized questions about attitudes in your work environment – attitudes held by someone other than yourself. Please know that I do not take your opinion as factual; rather, I am interested in your interpretation of these attitudes and how that has impacted your responses and experiences.

1. How long have you worked in corrections?
2. Do you currently/most recently work in an institutional or community corrections environment?
 - a. Have you ever worked in the other environment (i.e. institution/community)?
3. What region do you currently work in?
 - a. Have you worked in any others?
4. Have you ever supervised other staff in corrections?
 - a. If so, was the supervisory position temporary or permanent?
5. In your perspective, is the corrections industry a male dominated profession?
 - a. Is this dependent upon the specific work environment (i.e. institution vs. community)?
6. Do you think your experience as a woman working in corrections is different than the experience of a man working in corrections?
 - a. Why or why not?
 - b. If different, can you provide an example of a time when you feel your experience was impacted by your gender?

More specific questions:

7. Have you had to wear a uniform in corrections?
 - a. If so, what was that experience like for you?
 - i. Did the uniform you were provided with fit properly?
 - ii. Was the uniform comfortable?
 - iii. Were there issues with your uniform?

8. If you do not currently wear a uniform to work, can you tell me a little about how you normally dress for work?
 - a. Do you ever wear a skirt or dress?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - b. Is the way you dress for work different than the way you dress when off-duty?
 - i. If so, how?
 - c. Do you normally wear make-up to work?
 - i. Do you normally wear make-up when off-duty?
 1. If these two answers are different, why are they different?
 - d. Do you normally wear jewellery to work?
 - i. Do you normally wear jewellery when off-duty?
 1. If these two answers are different, why are they different?
9. Are there expectations around what you wear to work?
 - a. Are these expectations different for men and women?
10. Is there a difference in the way you talk (or the language you use) at work and the way you talk outside of work?
 - a. If yes, can you tell me a little about that?
 - i. What are the differences?
 - ii. Why is this different?
11. Is there a difference in the way you carry yourself (body language) at work and the way you carry yourself outside of work?
 - a. If yes, can you tell me a little about that?
 - i. What are the differences?
 - ii. Why is this different?
12. Do you consider yourself to be feminine?
 - a. Can you tell me a little more about this...
 - i. What does it mean to you to be feminine?
 - ii. Is femininity a part of your self-concept?
 - iii. Is there a difference in your presentation of femininity when you are off-duty as compared to when you are working?
13. What characteristics do you think officers value in their co-workers?
 - a. Do you value these same characteristics?
 - i. Why or why not?
 - ii. Are there other characteristics you think are valuable that are under-valued by your co-workers?
14. What characteristic are undesirable in an officer, according to other officers?
 - a. Do you agree with this assessment of undesirable characteristics?

i. Why or why not?

15. Do you believe male officers value different characteristics in their co-workers than female officers do?

16. In your experience, is it possible to make a general statement about the opinion of male officers about working with women?

a. If so, what is that statement?

The next set of questions are going to use some specific terms, so I would just like to clarify the way in which I will be using the terms in my questions. The terms are sexism, sexist harassment, sexual harassment, and sexual violence.

Sexism: prejudice, stereotyping, or discrimination, typically against women, on the basis of sex/gender.

Sexist Harassment: generalized sexist remarks and behaviour ... not necessarily designed to elicit sexual cooperation, but rather to convey insulting, degrading, or sexist attitudes.

Sexual Harassment: any physical, visual or sexual act experienced by a person that is focused on the person's sexual identity which makes them feel all or any of the following: embarrassed, frightened, hurt, uncomfortable, degraded, humiliated or compromised; which has the further result of diminishing a person's power and confidence.

Sexual Violence: a violent act of a sexual nature that violates the sexual integrity of the victim.

17. Have you witnessed episodes of sexism in your work environment?

a. Can you tell me about some of these?

18. Have you witnessed episodes of sexist harassment in your work environment?

a. Can you tell me about some of these?

19. Have you witnessed episodes of sexual harassment in your work environment?

a. Can you tell me about some of these?

20. Have you witnessed episodes of sexual violence in your work environment?

a. Can you tell me about some of these?

21. Have you personally experienced any of the above (sexism, sexist harassment, sexual harassment, or sexual violence) in the workplace?

a. Can you tell me about some of these?

22. If you have witnessed or experienced any of the above, to what do you attribute this behaviour?

- a. Why do you think this happens in corrections?
 - i. Are there factors that are specific to corrections that contribute to this behaviour?
23. Have you witnessed episodes in the workplace that you believe others – outside of the industry – would consider to be sexist or sexual harassment, but you do not?
- a. Can you tell me about some of these?
 - b. Why is your opinion different?
24. Do you feel that sexism is a problem in Corrections?
- a. Why or why not?
 - i. Examples?
25. Do you feel that sexist harassment is a problem in Corrections?
- a. Why or why not?
 - i. Examples?
26. Do you feel that sexual harassment is a problem in Corrections?
- a. Why or why not?
 - i. Examples?
27. Do you feel that sexual violence is a problem in Corrections?
- a. Why or why not?
 - i. Examples?
28. Do you believe an officer subculture exists in corrections?
- a. If so, can you describe this subculture to me?
29. Do you have any further thoughts you would like to share in regard to anything we discussed today?